



*Do you know, that this symbol can mean ‘two’ for Americans, ‘Victory’ in Germany, or as **an offensive sign** in England?!*

Cultural sensitivity is being aware that cultural similarities and differences between groups exist, without seeing them as being positive or negative. Simply, it means that we don’t consider another culture to be **better** or **worse** than yours. As students and teachers we will all at some point be working or studying along people from other cultures, whether in Colombia or abroad, so will have to face daily situations with dominant and secondary cultures, and respect the other groups’ characteristics and

understand them.

Without cultural sensitivity there can be no effective interpersonal communication between people who are different in gender or race or nationality or affectional orientation. So be mindful of the cultural differences between yourself and the other person. This developmental model of intercultural sensitivity by Milton J. Bennett can give you an indication of your level of cultural sensitivity. Where do you lie in this model? (*The further to the right is more culturally sensitive.*)

Ethnocentric			Ethnorelative		
Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
My cultural experience is the only one that is real and valid. There is little to no thought of “other.”	“We” are superior and “they” are inferior. One feels threatened and is highly critical. What is strange may be labeled as stupid.	Other cultures are trivialized or romanticized. One tends to deny differences (e.g., “color blind”) and only seek similarities.	I accept but may not agree with other cultures. Generally, I am curious and respectful.	I “see” the world through different eyes and make intentional changes in my own behavior and values.	I easily move in and out of different cultural worldviews.

**WE** should be culturally sensitive for effective interpersonal communication between people who are different to us—maybe through race, sexuality, gender or nationality. **Here are some tips to help to increase your cultural sensitivity:**

1. **Prepare yourself.** Read about and listen carefully for culturally influenced behaviours in your classroom.
2. **Recognize your fears.** Recognize and face your own fears of acting inappropriately toward students of different cultures.
3. **Recognize differences.** Be mindful of the differences between yourself and students from other cultures.
4. **Recognize differences within the group.** At the same time that you recognize differences between yourself and students, recognize that there are often enormous differences within any given group of students.
5. **Recognize differences in meaning.** Words don’t always mean the same thing to members of different cultures.
6. **Be rule conscious.** Become aware of and think mindfully about the cultural rules and customs of students.