

How to be Sensitive to Diversity in Your Organization

How to be sensitive to diversity in general:

1. Realize that you have the responsibility to be a role model. Refrain from making stereotypical comments. Watch your humor; avoid ethnic jokes or any type of humor that demeans others. Confront others on this as well.
2. Educate yourself by taking classes or attending campus events that focus on ethnic or racial groups about which you have limited knowledge.
3. Get to know resources that support minority groups on campus. Provide this info to members in your organization.

How to be sensitive to diversity in programming:

1. When making presentations, use a variety of modes - informal discussions, formal lectures, printed, audio, and visual materials.
2. Ensure that group members are exposed to a variety of presenters, with respect to race, ethnicity, and gender, as well as different presentation styles.
3. Visual materials can be a way to reach those who usually do not attend programs. Use bulletin boards and post information in bathroom stalls.
4. Plan ethnic dinners and cultural nights, but be sure to avoid stereotyping when publicizing and advertising programs.
5. Make sure your programs are held in wheelchair-accessible areas if possible.
6. Advertise your programs visually and audibly.

Sensitivity to religions:

1. Know which religions are represented in your organization.
2. Find out about the holidays your group members would like to celebrate.
3. Familiarize yourself with days that are considered a time for serious reflection (Yom Kippur, Good Friday, etc.) and avoid planning activities on those days.
4. Avoid scheduling too many events on days considered the Sabbath or holy days (Sunday mornings, Friday sundown-Saturday sundown).
5. Consider planning gift-giving activities around the theme of finals, rather than a holiday theme to be more inclusive. Or plan a combined holiday party: Kwanzaa/Christmas/Hanukkah/Winter Solstice.

Sensitivity to race:

1. Realize that although African-Americans are the largest minority population in the U.S., there are other racial/cultural groups that may be represented in your group.
2. Do not limit programs about the positive contributions of various cultural groups to certain times of the year such as Black History month, Women's History Month etc.

Sensitivity to gender:

1. Be careful to avoid sexist language or graphics in published materials.
2. When delegating responsibilities for activities, do you notice sex-typed behavior? Do the women always volunteer to cook and shop? Do the men always handle the money? If so, call this to the attention of the group, and discuss sex-role issues.

3. Are the activities planned seem to reflect the interests or needs of one gender over the other? If so, check out the needs of the other group.

Sensitivity to sexual orientation:

1. The assumption of heterosexuality permeates our society. However, research indicates that 10% or more of the population is gay. It is likely that members of your organization are gay, even if you are not aware of this fact. Avoid homophobic language and the assumption that all members are straight.
2. If you sponsor programs that require taking a date along, realize that you might be excluding a portion of your organization, those that do not date, or are gay. Work within your organization to create a culture where it is acceptable to not bring a date, or bring a date of the same gender.