

HOW DO I BECOME MORE Culturally Aware?



We live in a beautifully diverse world. Indeed, every day you're likely to see people of various ages, ethnicities, and cultures. You may notice people speaking different languages, dressing in different kinds of clothing, eating different kinds of food. It's important that we not only see and observe cultural differences, but that we embrace them.

Embracing diversity and having cultural awareness paves the way for a better appreciation of others' values, customs, and beliefs. Moreover, being culturally aware enables better communication and can help build stronger relationships because you understand what may be considered inappropriate or offensive to others.

How does one become more culturally aware? It's easier than you may think. Here are some pointers and tips to help you get started:

Understand that culture is more than just someone's race and ethnicity.

There's much more to someone's culture than the color of their skin or their ethnic background.

Culture encompasses the social behavior and norms found in our societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups.

Do some research.

This may be especially helpful if you work, have friends, neighbors, etc. of different cultures. Reading up on the history and norms of these cultures will give you better understanding, and it may help address misunderstandings or unconscious biases you may have held.

Attend community events and celebrations.

You can learn about different cultures and have a lot of fun while doing it! Many communities celebrate traditions or specific dates that are important to their culture and heritage. From Cinco de Mayo to Pride parades to the Hindu celebration of the arrival of spring—there are cultural celebrations all the time, around every corner.

Acknowledge differences and ask about them.

If you think you're being kind by ignoring someone's culture, think again. People feel

respected and appreciated when others take a genuine interest in who they are. Ask open-ended questions about their culture or share your personal story or experience to initiate conversation.

Keep in mind that cultural awareness is a lifelong journey. If you gain awareness in one culture it doesn't mean you have competence in another. Keep finding ways to expand your learning and awareness!

RING IN SPRING!

Celebrate the arrival of spring with the "Holi Festival of Color". This is a Hindu celebration of the triumph of good over evil and the arrival of spring. With the Holi tradition, participants throw and catch a rainbow of powdered colors, essentially painting themselves and becoming living, breathing works of art!

If you live in Houston, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, or other major cities in the U.S., there may be a Holi Fest near you.