

## Lesson I: Building Cultural Competency: A Look at Triggers

**Outcomes** – At the end of this lesson, participants will be better able to:

- identify and respond to triggers based on cultural differences

### Materials Needed

- Overhead transparency machine (optional)
- Easel pad and pens

### Handouts

- Triggers Worksheet

### Transparency or Poster

- Ground rules
- Definition of cultural competency

### Preparing to Teach this Lesson

- Write up and post the lesson objective
- Make copies of the Triggers Worksheet
- Prepare transparency of the (1) ground rules and (2) definition of cultural competency, or copy each onto a separate easel pad sheet (save the ground rules sheet for future lessons)

### Community Resource People

- Not applicable to this lesson

### Summary

At the end of each lesson is a debriefing or summary section. It is very important that the lesson be timed to allow sufficient debriefing with the employees. During this reflection period employees can discuss the information learned, clarify any concerns and analyze skills that they have practiced. This is a critical step in the learning process and should not be neglected.

## Methods

### Part 1: Introduction of Lesson and Review of Ground Rules (5 minutes)

- Welcome the employees to this series of lessons that will provide opportunities to practice skills and deepen understanding learned from the on-line course. Explain that these lessons are informal and will involve discussion. Introduce the ground rules and indicate that these will allow for good discussion.

Transparency or Easel Pad Paper

#### Ground Rules

1. One person speaks at a time.
2. Describe behaviors, not personalities.
3. Maintain confidentiality.
4. Share responsibility - speak up if something is not working for you.

- Get a volunteer to read aloud rule 1. Note that this will not need much explanation.
- Get a volunteer to read aloud rule 2. Ask if anyone can explain this or give an example. For example, in their discussions they might state that when another person interrupts them or finishes a sentence for them, they are upset. They should not describe that they work with a person who is controlling.
- Get a volunteer to read rule 3. Ask what confidentiality means for these lessons. Explain that confidentiality can be defined in many different ways. It is recommended that the employees define it as anonymity, meaning that no names or positions are identified with stories or in post-exercise discussions. This gives people a chance to explore with others what they feel and experience without falling into the tendency to talk about or report what others said. Ideally, the group will define confidentiality to increase comfort and buy-in.
- Get a volunteer to read rule 4. Encourage employees to speak up.
- Ask for agreement on these rules: “Does everyone agree to uphold these ground rules?” and the flipside, “Is there anyone who cannot agree or uphold these ground rules?”
- If there is any disagreement, listen to the disagreement and take responses, if any.

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- In any case, encourage participants to share only what is comfortable for them. Acknowledge that it is a delicate balance to ask people to be revealing, to discuss values, family history, etc., in the work place.

**Part 2: Define Cultural Competency (10 minutes)**

- Brainstorm definition of cultural competency as it relates to work in the courts and then put the definition on overhead or easel pad. Point out that cultural competency applies to society in general, but the focus of these lessons is how it relates to working with diverse employees and court users.

Transparency or Easel Pad Paper

**Cultural Competency**

- A set of values, behaviors, attitudes and practices
- Within a court system and among individuals
- Enabling them to work effectively regardless of culture
- To ensure the integrity of the courts

- Ask participants to pick a number from 1 to 10 silently, that represents their personal level of cultural competency -- “1” is the lowest level and “10” is the highest level. Inform them they will never have to reveal this number.
- Ask what makes some people more culturally competent than others. What experiences or facts from their own personal background have expanded their personal competency?
- Inform participants that they’re first going to build on the trigger lesson from the on-line course, especially as it has to do with cultural competency.

**Part 3: Explore Triggers (25 minutes)**

- Brainstorm definition of trigger.
- Pass out Trigger Worksheet and look at definition of trigger listed there.

Worksheet

**Triggers Worksheet**

**Definition:** Triggers are your reactions to something, someone, or an event that does not work for you; something you have decided is unacceptable, offensive, unpleasant, or objectionable.

1. When I am talking to someone at work, I react negatively to words, tone, body language as it relates to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, color, age, handicap or political views. if...  
I usually react by...  
This is probably because...
2. I can't stand it when someone at work...  
I usually react by...  
This is probably because....
3. How would you prefer to act? Why?
4. If I wish to react differently, how can I modify my action to avoid a gut reaction to my trigger?
5. What concrete steps will I take to make the change?

- Remind the group of these percentages:  
People interpret meaning based on
  - i. Words 7%
  - ii. Tone 38%
  - iii. Body language 55%
- Ask people to fill it in the Trigger Worksheet. Inform them they are not required to share, but will be invited to do so.
- After 5 minutes or so, brainstorm responses in each area. Remind employees of the ground rule to talk about behaviors not personalities. Start off with your own answers to get the discussion started.
- Identify where there are similarities and where there are unique triggers.
- Explore further with these questions:
  - What steps can you take to modify your reaction to a trigger?
  - How can you contribute to a bias-free work environment when you are triggered?

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- Thanks participants for their input, and remind them that the goal of this effort is to provide a more accessible court system for users and co-workers.

**Part 4: Summary (5 minutes)**

- Ask employees whether they will work on their reactions to triggers.
- Have each employee think about one thing he or she learned during the session. Ask them to write that down or share with a partner. After a few minutes, ask a few volunteers to share their ideas with the rest of the group.

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Handout  
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