



BELONGING CULTURE

Becoming Culturally Responsive

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED



85 minutes

OVERVIEW

This session will examine the importance of being culturally responsive and introduce effective strategies that support it. In this session, your service year corps members will explore the meaning of being culturally responsive, ways to unlearn practices that reduce cultural awareness and sensitivity, and new strategies to enhance their understanding of cultures that differ from their own.

LEARNING OUTCOMES



By the end of this session, your corps members will be able to:

- Understand the process of becoming culturally competent
- Understand the importance of having a willingness to learn, unlearn, and build upon our own understanding of others' culture and identity
- Understand how the process of culturally responsive practices plays a significant role in being able to impart knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes
- Understand the value of engaging with others in a culturally responsive and affirming way

TRAINING SESSION RESOURCES

Before getting started with this training session, you should review the Preparation section below as well as familiarize yourself with this guide's Session Script. This session should be presented directly to corps members using this downloadable presentation:

- **Downloadable Presentation:** [*B4: Training Session: Becoming Culturally Responsive*](#)

The downloadable presentation includes speaker notes for program staff who are facilitating this session directly to corps members, making it easy for staff to walk through the presentations efficiently and effectively.

PREPARATION

Trainer Expectations

Throughout this training session, trainers will be asked to facilitate the group through small group discussions and full group discussions. Some of the topics may feel challenging for your corps members to engage with, and they may not want to engage in conversations on these topics at first. Part of fostering a belonging environment is making the space equal with corps members and program staff. Therefore, we recommend you, as the facilitator, prepare responses to the questions posed to the corps members throughout the session as a strategy to help spark conversation if needed. Before beginning this session, review the Session Outline & Script below and ensure familiarity with the content to be prepared to facilitate activities and answer potential questions from corps members. You'll notice in the Session Outline there are resources linked to provide background on the subject matters included in this training.

	TIME ESTIMATE
	LEARNING OUTCOMES
	VIRTUAL MODIFICATION
	ACTIVITY
	HELPFUL TIP

Necessary Materials

- Distribute pen and paper for your service year corps members to take notes
- One printed copy for each corps member:
 - [B0: Glossary](#)

Virtual Modifications

If you plan to facilitate the training session in a virtual environment, we recommend the following modifications:

- Use a whiteboard that can be displayed on camera or share your screen and work in a word or google document
- If you have group break out sessions, set up the groups in advance via your video conferencing software
- Don't forget to send an email with any necessary handouts in advance of your remote session

SESSION OUTLINE

The following outline walks you through what to expect throughout this session and how to prepare.

I. Creating space to be culturally responsive

In this section you introduce the topic for this Belonging session, set a lens for the conversation, and provide tips for engaging throughout the session. You will also distribute the [B0: Glossary](#).

II. Centering our humanity, grounding, and objectives

In this section you will ground the group in preparation for this session's content. You will also set a specific community agreement for this conversation.

Necessary materials: Have these agreements written in the room somewhere, on chart paper or printed out. If virtual, have them at the top of a notes document that you share for the day.

III. Understanding the framework of being culturally responsive

In this section you will introduce the concept of Anti-Racism as a framework and explain how it is necessary to first do the inner work for one's self before focusing on your relationship with others.

ACTIVITY: Anti-Racism as a framework - journaling & full group discussion 

Preparation needed: You should review slide #11 and ensure you are knowledgeable with the content.

IV. Collective responsibility

In this section you will introduce the concept of collective responsibility and how capacity can be built through relationships.

ACTIVITY: Capacity Building Through Storytelling - Small & full group discussion 

Preparation needed: You will show a 3 min YouTube video during this section. You should test to make sure the video works and view in advance so you can help contextualize the content. [Video link.](#)

V. Cultural responsiveness & cultural competency

In this section you will discuss cultural competency, or being aware of one's own cultural identity, and how that is a prerequisite to cultural responsiveness. Cultural responsiveness is an approach to viewing an individual's culture and identity as an asset and focuses on creating experiences and environments that value and empower that asset.

ACTIVITY: Process & Reflections - journaling & full group discussion 

VI. Close-out

You will lead a close out by creating some space for processing & reflection with both journaling and group discussion.

SESSION SCRIPT

The following script should be used for presenting this session directly to your corps members. It is recommended that you review this script before beginning the session. *Italicized prompts* are intended to be guidance for you as the trainer rather than part of the script you will communicate to your corps members.

Slide #1

Today's session is called Becoming Culturally Responsive. This session is for all of us who are on a lifelong journey to become more aware and more culturally competent and want to put that into our practice. I encourage you to have a journal or paper accessible so you can write down notes, thoughts, or questions that may come up for you during the session.

Distribute the [B0: Glossary](#) to your service year corps members and have them review the key terms for the Session B4 so they are able to become familiar with the terminology used throughout the session.

Slide #2

Our agenda for today is:

- To create the space for our conversation and set the lens and ways to engage throughout the session.
- We'll then begin to understand the framework for being Culturally Responsive
- We'll discuss Collective Responsibility and how relationships are core to this work.
- Next, we'll cover what it means to be Culturally Responsive
- Then, we'll reflect before wrapping up.

Slide #3

We'll start our conversation the same way as others in this belonging curriculum – with suggestions for how to engage with today's content:

- Take note of terms and concepts that resonate with you during the workshop. These can be reviewed later for further reflection today and throughout the year.
- Consider your lived experiences and how they influence your understanding of the social identities we will be discussing today.
- Stay open. Some of the information we share might challenge your ideas around belonging and safety and that's okay. If we all stay open, then we can hold the container together.
- If you are more knowledgeable on this topic, challenge yourself to do some deeper reflection.
- There is always room to learn and grow. We are all a work in progress.

Any questions? Let's get started with how you are showing up today.

Slide #4

Look at the pictures on the screen, choose a letter, or letters, that represent how you are showing up today. Take 5 minutes and check in those around you What letter(s) are you feeling and why? Share as much as you feel comfortable with before moving forward.

Pause to allow time for people to find a few people around them and share.

Thank you for taking the time to center our humanity. Because we are all showing up differently today, we are now going to take some time to ground ourselves and make space for today's session content. and grow. We are all a work in progress.

Any questions? Let's get started.

Slide #5

Before we can begin this session, it is important that we create space and honor where we are all coming from, the stressors we are carrying, and any tension we may be feeling. This will allow us to better create the capacity we need to do this work together.

Slide #6

Let's start by closing our eyes. Place both feet on the floor. Place them gently, so you aren't digging your feet into the ground. Place both hands on your knees and tap each fingertip to your leg gently. Sit up straight and adjust your body. Starting from the top of your head, we are going to do a body scan. Notice any tension as you slowly scan your body starting from your head, to your temples, to your jaw, then down to your neck and shoulders. Releasing any tension you are feeling. Notice your stomach, if you are sucking it in, release. Down to your legs, your calves, and to your feet. Release any tension you are feeling. If your body begins to sway, let it move in the ways it needs to move. Notice your breathing. Taking in breath at a count of 4, holding it for 4, and then releasing it. Let's repeat that 3 times. Breathe in, and as you inhale, breathe in what you want to be true for today's session, and as you exhale continue to release any tension or stress you may be feeling.

After 3 more breathing rounds...

Slowly open your eyes when you are ready. Thank you for participating. As always, any practice we engage in has purposeful intention behind them. I hope you feel centered, grounded, and ready to engage.

Slide #7

Our objectives for today are to begin or continue our understanding, ways of being, and practice being culturally responsive. You'll notice that the words begin and continue are highlighted because we are all in different places on this journey. We will also begin or continue to understand how to incorporate our learning into our practice. Remember, this isn't just one training session, it's the beginning of a lifelong journey.

Slide #8

It may seem like there's a lot of build up before today's actual session content – and there is! We all are coming into this learning and (un)learning from different places. We all have different lived experiences, so it is important that we have guidelines, internally and externally, to help us operate. Our group has already created community agreements, but we wanted to name some additional agreements for today that might be brand new or might reinforce our existing community agreements. They are important for any space that engages in courageous content and dialogue. Let's briefly go through each one.

- By invitation only - everything we ask you to engage in, will always be by invitation. We ask you with a purposeful intention, but you have the autonomy to choose how you engage.
- Listen not to form an opinion but to receive - many times we listen already thinking about our response. Let's try to listen to receive, not to form an opinion or judgment, but to see and understand people more fully.
- Own both our intent and impact. Sometimes we have beautiful intentions, but the impact is harmful. Let's own it. Apologize if we need to.
- Share the "mic" - some of us are verbal processors, some of us are not. Be mindful of how much airtime you take up to give space for people to think.
- Identify assumptions - check ourselves when we are assuming or thinking and believing within our own bias, or blindspots.
- Work on taking the "mask" off - #Be - try to show up authentically, try not being a representative of yourself, but really be you and speak your truth.
- Take responsibility for our own feelings - own how you feel: guilty, shameful, angry, etc...own it.
- Open our hearts and minds to one another - even if you don't have the same lived experience as someone, be open to their truth and their lives. Believe them.
- Respect silence - it's okay when nothing is being said. Let the silence speak. Sometimes that's when our "aha" moments occur.
- When things get difficult, turn to wonder - don't shut down anything, allow room for questions, for hope, for possibility.

Any questions on these? Anything to share before we move on? Can everyone commit to these community agreements today?

Close out this slide by prompting the group: Now that we have gone over all of these, choose one that you think will be challenging, and take a moment to hold yourself accountable and think about how you can lean into that agreement today during this session.

Slide #9

Now, let's get to it! We have laid the very important groundwork, and now we are ready. Let's get started by understanding the framework of being culturally responsive.

Slide #10

On this journey, it's important to note that it is one of progression and regression – not one of perfection. It requires you to first engage with your "self" or do the internal work to ask the challenging questions about yourself. From this inner work, your ways of being and your actions will change. That change then impacts others to do the same, and the collective impact is then transferred onto systems at the policy level – at the systems level. In today's session, we are starting with self, and going to practice doing some of the inner work that a lot of people don't have the privilege of pausing to do.

Slide #11



To become culturally responsive, it requires some fundamental understanding of antiracist and restorative practices. You may ask: Why start with anti-racism? We start with anti-racism because race is cross-cutting across gender, age, sexuality, etc. It affects all environments and how people are able to show up. You cannot have measurable success in other identities – gender, age, sexuality, etc. – without starting with race first as it is a barrier for truly becoming culturally responsive.

This work requires us to understand anti-racism as a framework, not a checklist. Racism is one of many forms of oppression. We will be focusing on anti-racism as we dig deeper into culture and identity, understanding that this framework is useful for all forms of oppression – from classism, to ageism, etc. Our next session will dive into this framework in more detail. For now, we will use it just as a backdrop for understanding how our Self can be in relationship to others.

In this framework, there are 4 things we need to understand.

1. We acknowledge that we live within systems of oppression. We acknowledge that there is a false hierarchy that benefits some and harms others. We acknowledge this oppressive system isn't linear, and impacts all of us, as we all have varying intersecting identities.
2. We center the voices of those most impacted by these oppressive systems. Marginalized groups of people have not been heard or listened to for generations. Their stories have been tucked away and burned, while those in power see their stories are widespread. This framework calls for us to center those marginalized voices and listen and believe those counternarratives.
3. We turn to those most impacted. Not only must we listen and believe the voices of those marginalized, but we must also take direction and learn from those most proximate to the harm. This doesn't mean we put the weight of solving the problems on marginalized communities, it means we listen and take direction.
4. We seek to abolish those oppressive systems and reimagine, redesign, and recreate new systems that center justice, and the humanity of all people.

Let's take a moment to process and reflect all that we just heard. Write down any questions you may have in a journal. What does everyone think about what was just shared? Are there questions? Does everyone agree with what was shared? Again, we will dive more into this in the next session but we are introducing this framework here because it's so intertwined with being culturally responsive.

Hold the space for a group conversation.

HELPFUL TIP



This might be a difficult conversation. It is okay to sit with it and may be helpful to go back to the session community agreements. As a facilitator, the best thing you can do is to believe in the content and session and hold the container for your and your corps members' learnings.

Slide #12

In addition to understanding ourselves and the anti-racist restorative practice framework, we need to understand this idea of collective responsibility - or Ubuntu. This term is an African core belief, discovered by the Zulu people, a large group of people living on the continent of Africa prior to colonization. This idea says, "I am because we are, and we are because I am."

It is through our relationships that we are who we are. This means it requires each and every one of us to choose to do this work, and to do so in the collective. We are all connected and need each other. Understanding relationships beyond the superficial gives us capacity and space to share truths, to trust, to humanize and to care for people beyond the false hierarchy that we all exist within.

This ties back to session two on the brain science of belonging. This journey is about the "me," "we," and "us". And getting to the "us" helps us address anti-racism and build towards collective responsibility – getting to "us" allows us to become culturally responsive. Any questions before we move onto the next section?

Slide #13

We are now going to dive deeper into our collective responsibility and how we can build capacity through relationships.

Slide #14

We are now going to watch a short video on the story of self. It is just a little over three minutes.

Play video: [Video link.](#)

Bring the group back after the video.

Slide #15



Now it's your turn. We're going to break into small groups for an activity to give you all an opportunity to share your stories. There is no right or wrong story. Nothing is too small. We ask you to share only what you feel comfortable sharing in this space. Share something about yourself or your life. It doesn't have to be bad or good, it just is part of who you are. Whatever comes to mind is enough. You'll have 10 minutes to share with each other. After 10 minutes, we will come back to debrief.

We are going to break up into groups of three where you will have 10 minutes to share with one another – about 3 minutes per person. If you are sharing, share the full story uninterrupted (except for maybe a time check so everyone has time to share). If you are listening, your job is to just listen. You don't have to ask questions, just actively listen. After 10 minutes we will come back together and share out.

Break everyone into small groups of 3 and set a timer for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, move to the next slide. Consider your own story during this time and be prepared to share it during the discussion if needed to prompt more conversation.



If you are conducting this session virtually, you can choose to have your corps members break into groups with remote functionality or your corps members journal individually during this time.

Slide #16

Thank you for participating in this experience. Let's take 5-10 minutes and share some of your thoughts. What did you learn? Did you have any "aha" moments? What was challenging? Liberating? How do you think building relationships is connected to being culturally responsive? What else do you want to share?

If people are hesitant to share, you should consider sharing your own story during this reflection time as it may prompt additional thoughts and conversation.

Summarize corps members' responses and identify trends, themes, or connections you're noticing and transition to the next slide.



Have corps members unmute themselves and share their thoughts or put them into the chat box.

Slide #17

As we talk about striving to become culturally responsive and using culturally relevant tools, we have to think about how we are centering humanity. This means we must examine ourselves - our values, the lived experiences and identity that shaped those values. In short, we need to begin to understand our biases, and the privileges we hold. We are not just checking off a box, we are coming together to liberate ourselves. We need each other. Striving to be culturally responsive can only happen through relationships - to self and others. It's about each of us gaining the individual capacity to do our own inner work. There is no magic pill, we must simply do the "work!" As we transition into how to be culturally responsive in the next slides, I want you to keep in mind these pieces of self and those relationships to others.

Also, keep in mind the pieces that might keep individuals from fully showing up and not telling their true story to become part of the collective - we touched on racism as being a trigger that can be a factor in our connection to each other.

Slide #18

Being Culturally Responsive is a framework – it's more than just checking a box. It requires internal work and a shift, and in many cases, in our ways of being. It's about how we show up, what we believe, and who we are at our core. This is a lifelong journey of work.

Slide #19

Cultural responsiveness is an approach to viewing culture and identity (including race, ethnicity, multilingualism, and other characteristics) as an individual's assets, and creating learning experiences and environments that value and empower them.

Slide #20

It requires individuals to be culturally competent. This competency means having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of others and their families.

This means, we are required to be aware of our own cultural identity, our own views, values, traditions – all the things that make us who we are. Oftentimes, white people, or dominant groups, have not had to do this internal work because their identity is centered as “normal.” It’s important to note that becoming culturally responsive requires you to do that work, to ask those questions, and to dig deep to find out why and who you are. It also requires you to have a willingness to learn, unlearn, and build on your own understanding of other’s culture and identity, and what makes them, them. Finally, it requires you to have compassion for yourself and others, as this is hard work. You won’t change in a day, but you will change if you are open to it.

Remember it’s not about the destination, it’s about the journey, the process of awakening to a different way of being and thinking.

Slide #21

This chart was edited from Zarretta Hammonds’ Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain. I think it’s applicable to all people and things, but especially for individuals like yourself who are working with communities. As we discussed and practiced, relationships matter. Hammonds argues that relationships exist at the intersection of mind and body, they are required before people can learn. There are 4 categories here that we should pay attention to:

- Awareness - As we previously talked about, starting with self and understanding your own culture, and the socio-political context around race and language.
- Learning Partnerships - Reimagining your relationship with young people and adults, recentering their humanity and seeing all they bring. This requires sharing power and creating strong partnerships rather than a false hierarchy.
- Information Processing - Creating an environment that challenges and stimulates growth, doesn’t focus only on writing but values the oral traditions too. This makes use of culturally relevant content, which we will talk about in a minute.
- Lastly, Community of Learners and Learning Environments - Creating a safe environment. This doesn’t mean that there won’t be harm, it means that when there is harm, it is acknowledged and repaired. It’s about creating an environment that centers people’s voices and their experiences, so they feel connected and loved.

Slide #22

Culturally relevant teaching was created by Gloria Ladson-Billings who says that it is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”

By doing the internal work to be culturally responsive, we create the space to bring that cultural relevance to our communities. By striving to understand your own culture, identity, biases, and privileges, and getting to know the community in which you work and live, you are able to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are relevant and asset-based and create the opportunity for reflection and dialogue.

Slide #23

Now, let's process and reflect collectively. We've taken in quite a bit of information. It is important that we give ourselves the time and space to process and reflect.

Let's engage using the prompts on the slide:

Select one of the statements and fill in the blank or finish the sentence. If you don't want to share with the group, you can use your journal to respond to the prompts.



If you're virtual, allow for 10 minutes of journaling time.

Slide #24

Bryan Stevenson, a widely acclaimed public interest lawyer, the Founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, and the author of a best-selling book on confronting injustice called *Just Mercy*, has a great quote that sums up today's session:

"We all have a lot to learn. I don't think we should expect to make progress on these issues without bumping into one another, without mistakes. We just have to have the humility and the patience and the courage to work through that. What I don't think we should do is just retreat because we don't know exactly where all the landmines are."

No one expects perfection, it's about the journey, about learning, about trying to do the work...you got this!

Slide #25

Thank you for participating in this session. Thanks for engaging, reflecting, and processing! We send you love on your culturally responsive journey.

Before we close out, what are you walking away with today? Are you walking away differently than how you entered the session? Feel free to share your thoughts out loud with the group or journal to reflect. Thank you for your engagement today.



Use the chat box for virtual sessions or prompt some journaling time.