HOW-TO-GUIDE

COMMUNICATION STYLES



The table below outlines different aspects of communication styles and how they tend to vary across cultures. Being aware of how communication styles tend to vary across cultures can help you avoid misunderstandings.

COMMUNICATION STYLE	CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
Tone, volume, and speed of speech	Culture can influence how loudly it is appropriate to talk, the tone and level of expressiveness in the voice, and the speed of speech. Loud, fast, and expressive speech is common in some cultures but could be considered rude or aggressive in others.
Eye contact	Culture can influence whether it is considered polite or rude to make eye contact when addressing someone, and whether eye contact is necessary to indicate that one is listening.
Use of pauses and silence	Culture can influence whether pauses and silence are comfortable or uncomfortable.
Facial expressiveness	Culture can influence whether low facial expressiveness is considered normal or interpreted as a lack of understanding, a lack of interest, or even resistance.
Emotional expressiveness	Culture can influence how open people are to talk about their feelings. It's important to note that people from cultures that tend to be more emotionally expressive may still think that it is inappropriate to discuss emotions (particularly negative emotions) with people who are not close friends or family.
Self-disclosure	Culture can influence whether talking to others about difficult personal situations is accepted or considered inappropriate. Individuals from cultures where self-disclosure is generally viewed negatively may disclose little about themselves and feel uncomfortable when asked to talk about personal problems.
Formality	Culture can influence whether personal warmth or respect and formality are more valued.
Directness	Culture can influence whether verbal directness is valued or considered rude.
Context	Culture can influence whether communication is high or low context. In low context cultures, words convey most of the meaning. In high context cultures, meaning is conveyed by more subtle verbal and non-verbal cues.
Orientation to self or others	Some cultures are more oriented to the self, while others are more oriented to others. This shows in communication styles through the use of mostly "I" statements versus use of primarily third person and plural pronouns.

SOURCES:

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