



## IT'S TIME... **WHERE DO WE BEGIN?**

"YOU CAN'T GO BACK AND CHANGE THE BEGINNING, BUT YOU CAN START WHERE YOU ARE AND CHANGE THE ENDING."

By Nancy Boyle | EAP Trainer | The Village Business Institute

**H**ow many of us have questioned our beliefs or viewpoints in recent weeks? Not only is the world collectively living through a pandemic, we're also facing very real societal issues that need to be discussed. We're inundated with messages through social media, the morning news, friends and co-workers as to the latest events and news. "Did you hear what happened? Do you agree with taking a stand?" These conversations can be difficult to have.

So how do we start having these difficult conversations? It starts with listening.

Stephen Covey writes in his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" the importance of listening "first to understand, then to be

understood." How often are we making snap judgments and not taking the time to listen to other viewpoints? Our perceptions and viewpoints are very true and real to us, but have you ever thought that what you believe to be true may not be true?

Many of us are starting to take an honest look at where our viewpoints come from. Various influences in our life like media, friends, and family play a role in our current beliefs and perceptions. We have conscious and unconscious beliefs and biases. It's important especially in our current climate of unrest to further understand what biases are, how to become aware of said biases, and how to challenge them.

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### YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

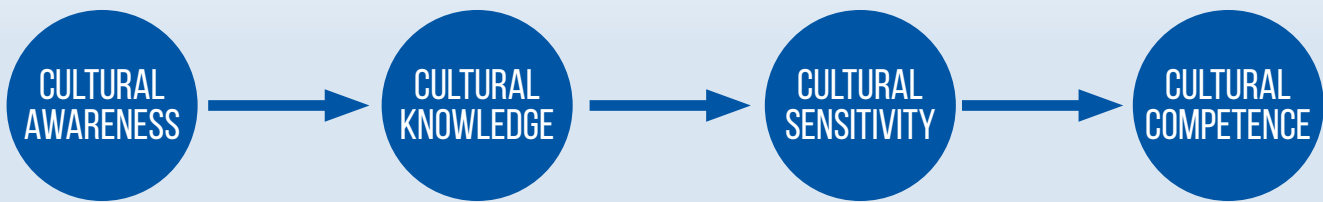
**Nancy Boyle**  
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**Q: Everything that's going on in the country right now has me feeling anxious. What can I do?**

**A:** In recent weeks we've all experienced a cumulative trauma. We're trying to make sense of everything. As we start each day, we are facing the realities of unrest. Our communities and workplaces are affected.

Many employees are feeling uneasy. This is normal when there is heightened stress or worry throughout the community. Many conversations throughout the workday center around the current political, social, and cultural climate of our country. When employees are actively involved with these issues, the emotional stress will affect employees even more.

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**“Me-Centered” Analysis**

What are my values, beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, styles, biases, stereotypes, and behaviors? (*Who am I?*)

**“Other-Centered” Analysis**

What are other’s values, beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, styles, biases, stereotypes, and behaviors?

**CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE**

**Knowledge Analysis**

How are my values, beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, styles, biases, stereotypes, and behaviors the same or different from others?

What additional cultural knowledge, awareness, and understanding do I need?

**CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

**Sensitivity Analysis**

Am I open to accepting and respecting differences? Why or why not? What are the benefits? What are the challenges for me?

Can I avoid assigning judgements, be better or worse, right or wrong, to cultural differences? Why or why not?

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

**Competence Analysis**

What adjustments both in the way I think and behave do I need to make in order to effectively operate in a different cultural context?

**This four-part cycle is a continuous developmental process.**

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I stated earlier it starts with listening. When was the last time you had a conversation with someone different from yourself, someone whom you know little about? This person may be a co-worker or a neighbor. Our conversations and understanding of others can open our minds and our hearts to individual struggles, hurts and joys. When we listen to others, we can find new truth, perspective, and connection.

You may say, “I’m not comfortable or ready to have these conversations.” You can start with educating yourself on issues affecting your nation and world culturally, socially, and politically. When we have a knowledge of issues, we can then have an honest and informed conversation about those issues. Listen to a podcast, watch a movie, or read a blog or book (see a few suggestions in the breakout box). Attend a local celebration or event that is outside of your norm or typical realm of influence.

**BOOKS AND ARTICLES**

- “A Different Mirror” by Ronald Takaki
- “Reinventing Diversity” by Howard J. Ross
- “Race and Poverty in America” by Dr. Martin Gilens
- “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh

**MOVIES AND DOCUMENTARIES**

- “Just Mercy” (2019)
- “Let It Fall: Los Angeles 1982-1992” (2017)
- “The Hate You Give” (2018)
- “13th” (2016)
- “An Inconvenient Truth” (2006)

Will the tough conversations become easier? Not necessarily. But the conversations and understanding gained do provide an opportunity to discuss and educate others.

The Winters Group, Inc., a 30-year-old diversity and inclusion firm, has created the Cultural Competence Model. The model looks at several areas from Cultural Awareness to Cultural Competence. As we become more knowledgeable about people, their history, struggles, and dreams, we become part of a community to which we previously were unaccustomed.

Through community, connection, and cultural competency, we can have more informed, empathetic, and understanding conversations. This will take time, honest reflection, and willingness to challenge our said beliefs. It’s time.

For information on training topics to become more aware and competent, contact us at 1-800-627-8220.

**YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED CONT.**

This can impact our ability to work in a variety of ways, including an inability to concentrate, increased errors, lapses in memory, increased absenteeism, a tendency to overwork, more arguments, and isolating ourselves from others.

Additionally, many companies may be in financial risk. This can be due to property damage, curfews, increase to insurance premium as well as possible staff shortages.

It is common to experience both emotional and physical reactions to cumulative trauma.

Common emotional reactions include feelings of anxiety and helplessness, anger, irritability, difficulty making decisions, and fears and phobias. We may experience insomnia or nightmares, fatigue, hyperactivity or “nervous” energy, stomach problems or appetite changes, and physical pains in our neck, backs or heads.

It’s so important to practice self-care during

these times of unrest. We are all walking on eggshells. Our well-being is affected. Remember to take care of yourself. Practicing self-care can diminish the anxiety and uneasiness that you may be feeling.

- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Acknowledge your feelings and thoughts
- Spend time with likeminded loved ones
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation
- Remember to watch sugar intake and get enough exercise

It’s key to have an outlet and have an opportunity to express the feelings you’re dealing with. Tap into The Village’s Employee Assistance Program. EAP services for employees and employers include counseling, critical incident stress management, mediation, and policy development. You don’t have to go it alone, and we want to hear from you. Call your Village EAP today at 1-800-627-8220.