

Cultural Observation Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to practice learning to observe and listen to the things around us recognizing that they may not be accepted and familiar. Instead of making quick assumptions as to the why we need to look deeper and see what the underlying values may be. This will help us when we are in environments that are different than what we are used to.

Find a grocery store/food store/restaurant that is owned by someone from a different culture and sells food pertaining to that culture. i.e. Asian foodmart, Indian grocery store, etc.

PEPARE: On the way down to your destination start thinking through where you usually buy your groceries/food.

What smells do you remember? What sounds? How big is the store? How do you check out? What kinds of people are around you? What food do you normally buy?

OBSERVE: Once at your destination take about 15 minutes to observe your surroundings at your destination.

- It smells like...
- The dominant sound I hear is...
- Something I do not see..
- The most obvious objects I see are..
- What are people doing?
- What are they wearing?

What 3 things did you observe that were unfamiliar to you?

What 3 things surprise you?

LISTEN: Stop for a full 4 minutes. Set a timer. Simply listen.

What did you hear?

LOOK DEEPER: Think underneath the surface and consider what the underlying values are that are showing themselves.

What values do you see represented? These may be present in the layout, people, types of food, smells, sounds?

ACTION: Talk with someone if possible, spend some time at this business. Find something you would buy that represents an underlying value. What is that item?