

# Unseen Barriers: *Navigating Memory Loss Care Across Cultural Lines*



## Addressing Cultural Disconnects in Memory Care

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# What is Culture?

## Understanding Our Own Culture First

- Culture includes traditions, values, beliefs, and daily habits
- Recognizing our own culture helps us understand others

**No cultural practice is right or wrong—  
just different**



# Culture isn't just about where you're from or the language you speak.



It's the traditions, values, and beliefs we pick up from our families and communities— **the stuff we do without even thinking about it.**

*Everyone has a culture, but we don't always recognize how much it influences us.*

# So...I ask you



What are the little traditions or habits you follow every day?

How about every year?

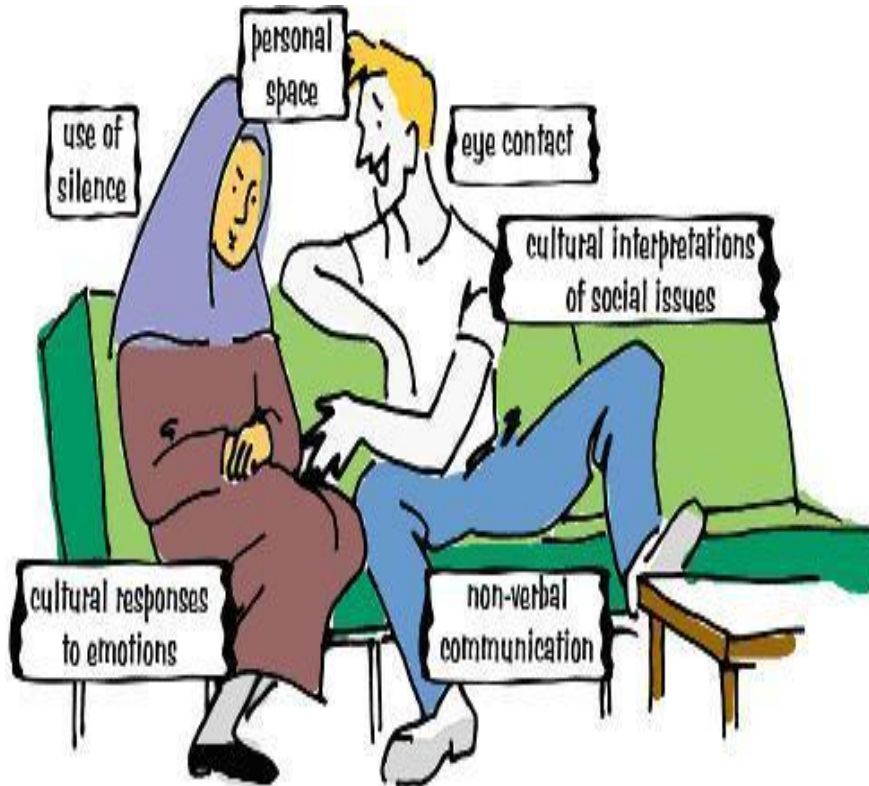


What values or beliefs guide your decisions?



How do you expect people to act in certain situations?

## Culture drives Behaviors



In some cultures, being direct is a sign of honesty, while in others, it can seem rude.

In some places, being five minutes late is a big deal, while in others, time is more flexible.

**Neither is right or wrong—  
it's just different.**

# ...oops...

Think about a time you misunderstood someone due to cultural differences.

How did it impact the outcome?



# “Kissing on the Cheek” =

- 🦋 (one cheek-to-cheek touch with an air kiss or one small Peck on the cheek or forehead –small kids only-)
- 🦋 is a fundamental part of many culture’s communication style. It’s almost an unconscious behavior, but the significance is undeniable.
- 🦋 It means we’re family.



**Why** is it important to know what motivates the person you're now trying to understand?





*By 2060, nearly 50% of the U.S. elderly population will be from minority groups.*  
(U.S. Census Bureau)

- Cultural barriers impact trust, care compliance, and patient well-being.

- Memory loss often erases second-language skills, leaving seniors unable to communicate with non-native caregivers.





## Understanding Cultural Disconnect in Memory Care

- **Language Barriers** – Seniors may lose their ability to speak English as memory declines.
- **Misinterpretation of Symptoms** – Cultural behaviors may be mistaken for dementia-related agitation.
- **Lack of Culturally Relevant Activities** – Seniors disengage when care feels unfamiliar.



## Real-World Case Study – How Centro de Amigos Breaks Cultural Barriers

Centro de Amigos: A Model for Culturally Inclusive Care

### Our Approach:

- Providing 100% person-centered care
- Building trust through culturally competent staff & activities
- Addressing barriers with tailored support services

### The Results:

- Increased participant engagement & requests for services
- Fewer, if any, missed appointments
- Stronger community relationships & representation credit
- Authentic relationships between members that last a lifetime

# Real-World Impact in Senior Care

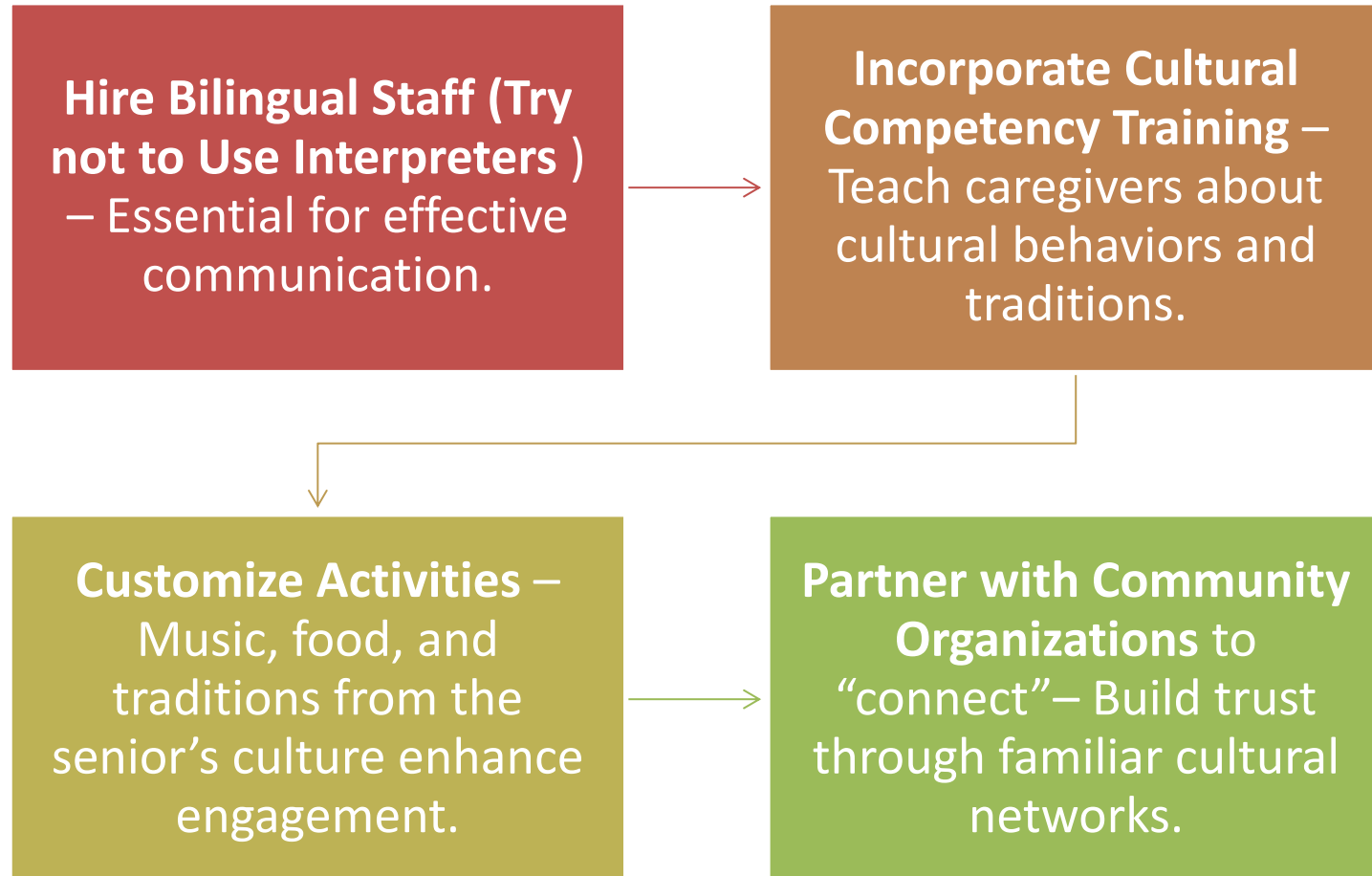
Case Study: Cultural  
miscommunication leads to a  
preventable hospitalization

- **When Maria sees her physician,**  
**she says, “I’m doing great, yes,**  
**feeling strong.”** She doesn’t mention  
the increasing gaps in *memory* that  
are causing her *anxiety*, missed  
meals or that she forgets to take her  
*insulin* and *faints (sleeps)* a lot when  
home alone.

Policy Impact: The need for culturally  
informed training and care models



# How to Overcome Cultural Barriers in Memory Care



# JUST A NOTE ABOUT “CLAS” (National Standards For *Culturally And Linguistically Appropriate Services*) training In Health Care

<https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/education>

*Think Cultural Health is an Office of Minority Health's (OMH) initiative /website that provides health and health care professionals with information, continuing education opportunities, and resources to learn about and implement CLAS and the National CLAS Standards*

<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/>

The Cultural Atlas is an educational resource providing comprehensive information on the cultural background of Australia's migrant populations. The aim is to improve social cohesion and promote inclusion in an increasingly culturally diverse society.



# Success Indicators of Cultural Competency



**Higher participation rates** in care programs.



**Reduced caregiver stress** due to better communication.



**Improved health outcomes** through stronger patient engagement.

# Practical Strategies for Policymakers & Providers

## For Providers:

- - Active listening & checking assumptions
- - Training staff in cultural awareness
- - Using interpreters cautiously

## For Policymakers:

- - Investing in culturally responsive training
- - Adjusting policies to accommodate cultural norms
- - Promoting diversity in leadership roles





# Call to Action



Policymakers:

Advocate for cultural training in senior care



Providers:

Implement one change in your practice today



Understanding THEIR culture makes YOUR actions more *effective, efficient, and impactful*

## Cultural competence

emphasizes an understanding of how the **majority** within a group may respond.

However, **Cultural humility**, recognizes **individuality** within an identified group allowing people to share their own preferences.

You may find that culture has **no effect** on the circumstance — *or may affect it in a totally unexpected way.*

*We just need to be aware.*

So, Stay Humble Amigos!

