

How could we define multicultural competencies?

To think about what, as individual practitioners, we can do to increase our multiculturally relevant practice ... [the following is an adaptation of] ... Sue et al's (1995) matrix that defines cross-cultural skills and competences for counsellors. The matrix organises skills and competences under the following headings:

- Awareness of own assumptions, values and biases
- Understanding the worldview of the culturally different client
- Developing appropriate intervention techniques and strategies.

The matrix is detailed and the original in Sue et al (1995) should be referred to, but for our purposes here in the context of career counselling and coaching, the following is a summary, and can be thought of as principles that offer guidelines for practice.

A practitioner who is culturally competent:

- Ensures they are aware of their own biases and limitations and are knowledgeable about how these affect the career counselling and coaching process
- Recognises the range of social variables that lead to cultural difference and are knowledgeable about the effects of oppression, racism, discrimination and stereotyping on themselves and others
- Understands differences in communication styles and their impact
- Is open about the career counselling and coaching process and actively seeks the client's understanding about the purpose of the interaction and their view about ways of working together
- Actively engages in training and education opportunities to enrich their understanding and effectiveness for working with culturally different groups

- Is aware of the impact of negative reactions and treatment experienced by culturally different groups, and seeks to understand this and not devalue that experience
- Understands how and why traditional and established approaches may be inappropriate and seeks out research and other material that will enrich their understanding
- Engages in outreach work with clients outside of the normal work setting to broaden their understanding
- Respects clients' beliefs, values and views about what career counselling and coaching can offer and what their community can offer, and is aware of any conflicting values they may have
- Values the language of the client and does not judge a language or manner of speech as an impediment to the career counselling and coaching process, and will refer when their (the practitioner's) linguistic skills are inadequate
- Recognises that institutionalised methods of assessment may be unhelpful and create barriers
- Is aware of discriminatory practices at the individual, social and organisational level
- Makes genuine attempts to advocate with, or lobby on behalf of, clients to overcome relevant discrimination
- Extends their communication skills so that they are not limited by a singular cultural approach
- Are open to alternative ways of helping, including using the resources of the client's community.

(Reid, 2016: 137/138)