

General Tips for Working with Multicultural Young People

Here are some tips and pointers for working with multicultural young people:

- Keep in mind that some subjects may be considered taboo in other cultures and should be broached with sensitivity. Drug and alcohol use is one example. Sex is another. When addressing these subjects, seek advice from multicultural organisations like MYSA or CALD young people and community leaders.
- Ensure that the information you provide to multicultural young people is easy to understand, relevant and interesting. Young people will be less likely to become bored or forget what they have learned if the information makes sense, directly meets their needs and can be applied to their everyday lives.
- Be creative with the design of information sessions and plan to use visual as well as written resources.
- Be careful with the use of language and humour when preparing information as many concepts and words will be unfamiliar to multicultural young people. If you are unsure, ask young people to review what you have prepared.
- Information sessions should be as interactive as possible. Avoid lectures as this will bore young people and they will be difficult to engage.
- Allow young people to have input into the content of information sessions as well as how information is presented. Most young people want to actively participate.
- Ensure that you know your group and speak clearly. Avoid big words, difficult terms and jargon. If English language is an issue, speak slowly and clearly but do not raise your voice. Watch out for non-verbal cues that could suggest people do not understand, for example, loss of concentration, blank stares, fidgeting, talking in their own languages to friends and keeping quiet.
- Be aware that in cross-cultural groups, some young people may hold back if there are no or few participants from their own cultural background. Use team building exercises to help them feel more comfortable.
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- If your information session is going to be long, ensure that there are regular breaks because young people will lose interest.
- Be sparing with the use of handouts as multicultural young people tend to discard written material, especially if it is not in their first language. Be careful with written translations as some multicultural young people are illiterate in their own language. If handouts are to be given, make sure they are culturally appropriate and youth friendly. Ask young people to provide input into the language, colours and fonts used.
- When providing refreshments for multicultural young people, it is important to determine which foods are culturally and religiously acceptable. For example, young Muslims are only permitted to consume food which is "halal". Halal means "permitted" or "lawful". Generally, most food and beverages are halal except for alcohol and pork, including pork-based products such as ham, bacon and lard. Halal has been used here as an example and is of course not the only food consideration. Information about culturally appropriate foods and beverages can be obtained from multicultural organisations like MYSA or CALD young people themselves.

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