

WHY STUDY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION?

1. In modern Korea, it's becoming increasingly likely that you will have extensive interaction with people from other cultures, particularly at work and at school. You may go abroad, or you may be required to work or study with non-Koreans here.
2. The better your English is, the more Koreans will ask you to explain the behavior of English-speaking people and the more English-speaking people will ask you to explain Korean behavior.
3. Your interaction with people from other cultures can be successful or not. How successful you are depends in part on your awareness that people from different cultures have learned to see the world differently from Koreans, just as people fifty or a hundred years ago learned to see the world differently from the way we do.
4. Whenever people from two or more cultures interact, problems will arise. However, if you have some idea what kinds of problems are likely to arise and why, then you will be better prepared to deal with them when they do.
5. To be better prepared, you need to understand some general concepts, including these:
 - a. value and belief systems
 - b. social structure
 - c. gender roles
 - d. behavior toward "the other" (prejudice, stereotyping, ethnocentrism)
 - e. culture shock
 - f. cultural dimensions (for example, individualism-collectivism)
6. To be better prepared, you need to understand specific differences between Korean culture and the other culture. In this book we present information from over a hundred interviews with North Americans living and working in Korea and with Koreans working with North Americans. The roundtable discussions themselves have been invented, but all of the information, the stories and examples the characters give, the role plays and the real life examples—everything—comes from real life.
7. You should be aware of one possible source of danger, and that is, stereotyping. We will need to talk about Korean culture and Western or North American culture in general terms. That certainly does not mean you should believe we think all Korean people are like _____ or you should think all Westerners are like _____. Stereotyping, or forming a category for a group of people, can create big barriers to intercultural communication. In fact, rather than think "those people always _____," it would probably be better not to know anything about them at all. Stereotypes prevent us from seeing the person in front of us. That means we aren't interacting with that person, but with our idea of that person.
8. We will use practical, real-life situations to show you how to build bridges over cultural barriers.