

CHART



Applying Culturally-Responsive Communication in Hispanic/Latino Communities


Understanding cultural norms can help you to better reach, communicate with and educate your audience. When you meet someone new, you should always remember to be open and respectful of their beliefs.


Hispanic/Latino Cultural Norms


There are some norms that are common among all Hispanic/Latino cultures. Below are examples of a few of those norms and ways to improve communication with the communities you serve.

NOTE

Understanding cultural norms is an important part of communication. But, it is important to avoid making decisions about people based only on their culture. Hispanic/Latino people do not all share the same culture. The cultural norms listed below may apply to most or only some of your audience. Try to learn about their values and beliefs before applying these communication strategies.

Cultural Norm	Description	Strategies for Communication
<p>Community and family are important</p>	<p>Hispanics/Latinos generally come from a culture where the well-being of the group or family is more important than one person's well-being¹. Also, in Hispanic/Latino cultures, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins and close friends are thought of as part of the family².</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, include family members in outreach and education events³. Many Hispanics/Latinos rely on the support and guidance of others to help make decisions. Family and friends are often involved in the decision-making process about health care⁴. • For much of your audience, the male head of household will be involved in the final decision-making about health care. For that reason, be sure to discuss the importance of early detection with both men <i>and</i> women. <div data-bbox="1013 732 1395 1100" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;">  <p>See the Breast Self-Awareness Key Messages for additional information.</p> </div>
<p>Faith and religion are important</p>	<p>Faith and church are often central to family and community life across Hispanic/Latino populations. Most Hispanics/Latinos believe that God is a part of their everyday life, and attend a religious service at least once a month⁵.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You could evoke religious values and beliefs to motivate your audience to take personal action for a healthier life. For example, if you are giving a presentation in a church, you might say that God created our bodies and that it is important to care for them, as they are a gift that God has given to us.

Cultural Norm	Description	Strategies for Communication
Respect	<p>In general, Hispanic/Latino populations place a strong emphasis on showing respect to authority figures. Many families and communities believe that the father or oldest male relative holds the most authority⁶. This respect often extends to other authority figures, as well⁷.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show respect by using formal rather than familiar words when addressing or speaking to people and groups. For example, use the formal “usted” instead of familiar “tu.” • Speak in a clear and sincere manner and encourage questions². For example, do not use jargon or acronyms like “CBE” for clinical breast exam. Your audience may not be familiar with these terms. • Study the makeup of your audience — including demographic information, cultural norms, educational and literacy levels and available resources. This will allow you to show that you have taken the time to understand the circumstances, interests and needs of your audience. <div data-bbox="1013 974 1395 1339" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 15px; padding: 15px; margin-top: 20px;">  <p>See <u>Getting to Know the Community You Serve</u> for more information.</p> </div>

Cultural Norm	Description	Strategies for Communication
<p>Personal familiarity</p>	<p>Many Hispanics/Latinos prefer personal relationships over formal relationships and tend to take a deep personal interest in others. In some cases, it is not uncommon for Hispanics/Latinos to sit or stand close to one another during conversations⁸.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When interacting with your audience, ask questions about family, friends, work or the neighborhood where people live. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have children? How many? • How old are your children? • What school do your children attend? • What neighborhood are you from? • Share your own background, life stories and pictures. This will help you connect, whether in a one-to-one conversation or within a group. • When reaching out to a community, find local leaders and introduce yourself and your work. Learn about the community and its priorities. Ask about who may already be doing work similar to yours and what resources would be most valuable. You can also ask for advice about the best person or people to partner with in the community. This engagement will display respect and trust in the community, which will increase the chance of success. <div data-bbox="1003 1192 1385 1560" style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;">  <p>See <i>Getting to Know the Community You Serve</i> for more information.</p> </div>

Cultural Norm	Description	Strategies for Communication
Trust	Trust grows from respect and familiarity. Hispanics/Latinos develop trust over time with mutual respect and interests. This is the foundation for long-term relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow through when you agree to do something for a person or group. • You should build relationships with leaders or organizations that are trusted by the community members. By doing so, you will have a greater reach into the community. Work with those trusted people/organizations to identify the community's priorities. Show that you are willing to help address some of the mutual priorities. Trusted entities in a community include churches, schools or health care providers. Organizations that train and coordinate community health promoters (promotoras) may be a good starting point⁹.
Fatalism	Fatalism generally refers to the belief that life events are guided by outside forces, and that people cannot do much to alter fate ¹⁰ . While this is a relatively common belief about Hispanic/Latino cultures, some research shows mixed evidence that this is a common belief among Hispanics/Latinos ¹¹ .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your audience to take control of their health by taking personal action on the breast cancer information they learned. • Explain the importance of knowing their risk, getting screened, knowing what is normal for them and making healthy lifestyle choices. • Share that having a goal to live a long and healthy life makes it possible to enjoy time with family. • Share that taking care of our bodies and following recommendations or guidelines for a healthy life can help to prevent us from being a burden for our families.

Cultural Norm	Description	Strategies for Communication
Food	As in other cultures, food plays an important role in Hispanic/Latino culture. Many Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. cook and take pride in foods specific to their countries of origin. Food is often seen as being central to social interactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide culturally-appropriate food at group presentations. Hispanic/Latinos often prefer hot meals (stewed chicken or beans and rice) over cold meals (sandwiches or wraps). • It is also important for you to partake in shared meals; refusing to do so could offend group members.

Cultural Beliefs and Health

It is important to consider how cultural beliefs impact health behaviors. Examples of ways cultural beliefs impact health behaviors include²:

- How illnesses/diseases and their causes are perceived
- Understanding of health, healing and wellness
- Use of traditional and non-traditional approaches to health care
- Decisions about health care and support
- Beliefs about biases within health care systems
- Behaviors and attitudes toward health care providers

Remember that, like other cultural norms, beliefs about health may not apply to the people and groups you meet. However, it is important to understand and address some of the barriers your audience may face in accessing health information and health care. Always ask questions in order to understand how your audience’s culture and experiences may affect their health behaviors.

This will help you to better communicate with your audience, share information that is appropriate and useful, help them overcome barriers and empower them to take action.

1 Gudykunst, W.B. (1998). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

2 US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (2001). *Quality Health Services for Hispanics: The Cultural Competency Component*. <http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence/servicesforhispanics.pdf>

3 American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures for Hispanic/Latino People, 2019-2020*.

4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Cultural Insights: Communicating with Hispanics/Latinos*. (NB)

5 Pew Hispanic Center (2007). *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion*. Retrieved August 21, 2013 from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/75.pdf>.

6 Kemp, C. & Rasbridge, L. A. (2004). Mexico. In *Refugee and Immigrant Health: A Handbook for Health Professionals* (pp. 260-270). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

7 Glenn Flores, "Culture and the Patient-Physician Relationship: Achieving Cultural Competency in Health Care," *Journal of Pediatrics* 136 (January 2000): 14-23.

8 National Alliance for Hispanic Health (2001). *A Primer for Cultural Proficiency: Towards Quality Health Services for Hispanics*. Retrieved from <http://www.hispanichealth.arizona.edu/primer%20for%20cultural%20proficiency%20nahh.pdf>.

9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Cultural Insights: Communicating with Hispanics/Latinos*. (NB)

10 Glenn Flores, "Culture and the Patient-Physician Relationship: Achieving Cultural Competency in Health Care," *Journal of Pediatrics* 136 (January 2000): 14-23.

11 Karen Flores, et al. "Fatalism or Destiny? A Qualitative Study and Interpretative Framework on Dominican Women's Breast Cancer Beliefs," *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* (August 2009): 11(4): 291-301.