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Chapter 5

I Think I Can and I Will

Why is it that some people are more willing and eager to work through intercultural challenges, while others seem unmotivated, disinterested, unengaged? Why do some people demonstrate high levels of confidence, while others are anxious, feel insecure, or shy away from the challenges? The ability to meet your goals is your self-efficacy; how you manage your confidence and your emotions is emotional intelligence; and your willingness to reflect and consider your surroundings is called mindfulness. In this chapter of the book, these three concepts will be discussed in relationship to cultural intelligence.

5.1 What is Self-Efficacy?

Self-efficacy[1], as defined by Albert Bandura,Bandura (1974). represents your perception of your abilities to meet a goal you have set for yourself. It is similar to self-confidence. Self-efficacy is a foundational component in cultural intelligence. For the past 25 years, scholars have researched this topic and the strategies that leaders can use to encourage higher levels of efficacy in their employees.

People with lower self-efficacy will have challenges throughout intercultural processes because they do not believe that they will be able to solve the problem. They do not feel they have the skills needed to work through the issues. Conversely, leaders who have higher levels of self-efficacy believe they can overcome obstacles, whether difficult or not. They have an easier time engaging in problem solving and finding strategic approaches for solving the issues before them.

Table 5.1 Self-efficacy Perspectives About Unfamiliar Cultural Settings

High Self-Efficacy Perspective About Unfamiliar Cultural Settings	Low Self-Efficacy Perspective About Unfamiliar Cultural Settings
The task is to master unfamiliar settings	The task is "too big for me" to handle
Sets higher commitment to goals and process	No commitment to goals and process
Internal motivation to work diligently	Motivation is decreased; little to no effort
"If I fail, I'll try again"	"It's too stressful, complicated, and frustrating."
Focus on success and removing obstacles	Focus on obstacles and challenges
Visualize positive experiences and outcomes	Visualize negative experiences and outcomes

1. An individual's perceptions of his or her abilities to meet a personal goal he or she has set.

5.2 The Role of Self-Efficacy in Cultural Intelligence

As a leader working with different and unfamiliar cultures, your self-efficacy determines how you think, feel, and behave in cultural situations. It is your beliefs about what you can and cannot do. It is your confidence level in intercultural situations and the results that it has on your ability to adapt to another culture. It is your belief that you have the ability to work through cultural issues that can contribute to your perseverance in daunting, challenging situations.

If you have a high level of self-efficacy, you are not afraid to take on cultural challenges. Instead, you perceive the tasks involved as if they are something to be mastered. Your belief stirs up an internal motivation for you to be successful and to fully engage in the problem. You are more likely to set challenging goals and diligently work through activities. You are also more apt to maintain a commitment to the process and the goals. When the going gets tough, you keep on going because of your perseverance and resiliency. Take, for example, the case of Jerry and Mingxia:

Jerry works in a large university and has managed the day-to-day operations of the study abroad center for three years. Because of the focus on studying abroad, many of the students who work in the center are from outside the United States. Most recently, Jerry hired a student from China for a work study position coordinating front desk activities. Jerry has enjoyed working with Mingxia thus far, but he has noticed that when he needs tasks to be accomplished, she doesn't give him a definite "yes" or "no" and sometimes provides an ambiguous response to his questions. He's quickly realizing that when she says "yes," it means she understood him but it doesn't mean she agrees. At first he is frustrated, but that frustration gives way to interest and fascination about cultural differences. He's had to sit down with her several times to discuss the tasks, but he approaches the conversation as a learning opportunity for him and her. He realizes that managing this cultural interaction is necessary for the work of the department. He has found that even though it takes more effort to build cultural understanding, he has seen it pay off. The other day, Mingxia brought in her friends who were interested in working with the center because they heard it was a great working environment and that he was a great boss.

Jerry's perception of cultural challenges was to change them into opportunities; he adapted to the situation at hand. This is a vastly different response than what would be observed in a person with a lower self-efficacy. These individuals tend to doubt their abilities in unfamiliar cultural settings. They tend to avoid challenging situations and often visualize potential failures and setbacks. Individuals with low self-efficacy attribute their failures to not having the right competencies or information for the situation, whereas those who have high self-efficacy attribute failures to not putting in the right amount of efforts required.

Using the CI model in Figure 3.1 "Cultural Intelligence Model", Jerry can think about this situation in this way:

Acquire: Jerry needs to acquire cultural knowledge to help him understand the situation better. He already knows from his interactions with Mingxia that language, particularly responding with "yes" and "no," may not be productive in this case. He also knows that Mingxia is from China and has connected his department with future employees. Jerry also could learn more about students from China and in particular, how they like to work with someone who is older than them.

Build: In this situation, Jerry can use what he knows and what he would like know to create new ways to interact with Mingxia. He may have to try the strategies and test them out. A culturally intelligent leader would think about how he could plan, monitor, and evaluate his strategies. During the process, he learns what works for Mingxia and what does not. For example, Jerry may want to try asking Mingxia questions that are not closed ended or require "yes/no" responses.

Contemplate: Along with his strategies, he may remind himself to pay attention to Mingxia's verbal and non-verbal cues. He could try either or both of these strategies, paying attention to his surroundings–both the visible and invisible pieces of culture; as he receives a response, he will adapt as needed. During the contemplation stage, Jerry can choose to suspend his judgments. When he notices he has judgments or a negative emotion is present, he can take a step back to listen and recognize what cultural scripts are occurring.

Do: As he interacts with Mingxia on a daily basis, he can learn to apply the fourth principle of CI. He can do this by asking himself how he might appear to Mingxia. Is he too authoritative? Too accommodating? Did he use words that were unclear? Was he too direct? These questions can help Jerry to use CI principles on a daily basis, and as a result, he learns more about himself and builds his self-efficacy.

Jerry's self-efficacy helps him to be a better culturally intelligent leader. When doubt is present in individuals it detracts from one's efforts. People with lower self-efficacy give up more easily and lower their expectations and goals. They see situations as not only uncomfortable but also, in some cases, threatening. Avoiding uncomfortable and threatening situations is a top priority for these individuals because it produces more anxiety, stress, disorientation, and frustration. Unfamiliar cultural situations become stressful and can be depressing. The following is an example of an American educator assigned to work with an Iraqi family:

Melissa is meeting Ashraf's parents to discuss his progress in class. This is the first time she is meeting his parents who have emigrated from the Middle East recently. When they arrive late to the meeting, she greets the father by offering to shake his hand, as common in American society. He looks puzzled and shakes her hand. Then, Melissa turns to the mother and proceeds to shake her hand. Ashraf's mother looks at Melissa, very confused, and then looks at her husband. A few seconds pass, but eventually she reaches out to shake Melissa's hand.

During the conversation with Ashraf's parents, Melissa asks both parents questions about Ashraf's home life. She wants to get a sense of how Ashraf is using the information he has learned in class in his home environment. Throughout the meeting, Melissa senses that the father is becoming more impatient and suspicious, and she is uncertain as to why. She notices that the father dominates the conversation and responds to the questions she poses to the mother. He also seems evasive when responding to her.

Melissa is beginning to feel very frustrated with the father. She finds herself repeating a lot of what she's said and explaining to the parents the reason for the meeting. Halfway through the meeting she knows she isn't going to accomplish what she initially set out to do. She's dreading a second meeting with the family, and she's becoming more and more impatient with the father. Why would he treat his wife like that? Doesn't he realize that she can answer for herself? For the rest of the meeting, Melissa loses her focus and finds herself thinking about other things. The meeting ends earlier than scheduled, but she's more than happy that the meeting is over.

After the meeting, Melissa shares the experience with her colleagues. She says, "The dad was always interrupting and the mom was really quiet. I'm pretty sure she's scared to disagree with him. Now, I have to meet them again because I didn't even get what I needed from them. This second meeting better not be a waste of my time. It's not like we have the luxury in this job to meet parents whenever they want."

Melissa's thoughts and actions revealed her stress and her level of discomfort with the situation. Because this is the first time Melissa has met with a Middle Eastern family, she does not know the proper cultural etiquette. She may not be aware of the cultural information she needs ahead of time to work with the family, which may explain why she does not pick up on the mother's hesitation when shaking hands. Additionally, Melissa uses judgments based on her cultural values system to

explain the uncertainty she feels. For example, she finds the father to be suspicious and evasive. How does she know that what she sees is a representation of suspicious and evasive behavior? She only knows what she sees based on her cultural experiences—her cultural lens.

Notice that in the latter half of the meeting, Melissa lowers her expectations and focuses her attention elsewhere. This is evident of her thinking, which implies that her cultural experiences are the only ways to interpret the world. Rather than taking responsibility for how the meeting was run, she puts the blame and responsibility on the family. To her, the father's constant interruptions and the mother's silence represented disregard for her objectives; thus, her comment, "It's not like we have a luxury in this job to meet parents whenever they want."

What can be done to help Melissa improve her self-efficacy? Using the principles of CI, Melissa can think about future cultural interactions in this way:

Acquire: Melissa can identify what she knows and does not know about Middle Eastern culture and in particular, Iraqi culture and customs. By identifying these areas, she creates a chart of her knowledge. Culturally intelligent leaders need to know what gaps exist for them when they interact with different cultures. In this case, Melissa will need to start at the basics, not just learning about Iraqi culture; she needs to learn about her own culture in order to understand how Iraqi families may be different from her own.

Build: Melissa can build her knowledge of the culture by gathering information from different sources such as books, documentaries, attending local events, or speaking with someone who knows about the culture. These are strategies she builds for herself to understand more about Iraqi culture. Some of these may be challenging to her because she may have never tried the strategies or activities before. But, as she conducts the activities, she can pay attention to how she feels and what she is thinking. By doing this, she will understand where her level of comfort is and where she needs to be challenged.

Contemplate: When applying this component of CI, Melissa may create a goal for herself to listen more to families' nonverbal cues. Paying attention to this enables her to suspend her assumptions. She may even reflect on what assumptions come up for her before, during, and after meeting with families. In contemplation, Melissa may reflect on her own motivation to helping families. How committed is she to helping all families, no matter their ethnic background? How motivated is she to keep trying even when she feels uncomfortable? These are some questions that she can ask herself and then find solutions to, moving her forward in a positive manner.

Do: Melissa's work in this particular CI element is to observe her own behaviors with families from different cultural backgrounds. As she practices her strategies, she can monitor and evaluate whether the behavior was appropriate or not by observing the responses from others. By checking her level of adaptability in the meetings, she will learn to mimic and mirror the appropriate cultural gestures and cues.

5.3 Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy

Have you ever been to a busy mall, event, or festival, or shopping during the busiest time of the season, and you could not find a parking spot? Driving all around, let us say that you finally located a spot, only to find that you cannot park there because there is a car that double-parked in that space. What is your reaction? What if this situation consistently happens to you and the parking lot is in a different city or state, a different region of the country, or another country all together? What is your reaction then? What assumptions would you make about the people who drive the car? What assumptions might you have about the people who live in that city, state, region, or country?

In cultural intelligence, a development of high self-efficacy is necessary in unfamiliar cultural environments. You do not have a choice but to develop a higher self-efficacy. This area of the human potential is spoken about in the study of emotional intelligence. Daniel GolemanGoleman (1995). was the first to popularize the concept of emotional intelligence (EI). Building on the work of John Mayer and Peter Salovey, Goleman distilled EI into a relatively concise set of five skills, addressed the following questions:

- How well do you *know* your emotions?
- How well do you *manage* your emotions?
- How do you *adapt or change* based on your emotions?
- How well do you *recognize* the emotions in others?
- How well do you *handle* relationships?

Self-management of emotions plays a critical role in leadership. As Goleman notes, managing emotions is a full-time jobGoleman (1995).. For leaders, self-management encompasses a multitude of competencies that include emotional self-control, that is, the ability to stay calm and clear-headed during periods of high stress or during a crisis. It is important for leaders to develop ways of dealing with their disruptive impulses and emotions, especially in intercultural situations.

Self-efficacy requires adaptability and initiative. Adaptability is your ability to juggle multiple demands, adapt to new challenges, and adjust to new changes. Adaptability allows you to effectively deal with the ambiguities of cultures. Your initiative is your competency to seize the challenges and turn them into opportunities. You create and act rather than wait.

Learning to develop an optimistic perspective will help you to improve your self-efficacy, thus improving your ability to be resilient to challenges. You begin to see the best in people and expect that changes will be positive. For example, Viktor Frankl, a man who survived the horrific experiences of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany, noted that even though he had suffered, he chose to see his experiences in the camps as one that held meaning for him. He said that choosing your own attitude in any situation is one of the most powerful freedoms provided to mankind.Frankl (1984).

Frankl shows that choosing one's attitude can shift one's perspective, thus creating new possibilities. His thinking on this subject matter has been instrumental in opening up new possibilities of thinking about the capacity of human beings to survive and find meaning in life. His book *Man's Search for Meaning* provides a platform for existential therapy and logotherapy.

5.4 Mindfulness and Self-Efficacy

What is *mindfulness*? According to Boyatzis and McKee, **mindfulness**[2] "is the capacity to be fully aware of all that one experiences *inside the self*—body, mind, heart, spirit—and to pay full attention to what is happening *around us*—people, the natural world, our surroundings, and events."Boyatzis & McKee (2005), p. 112. Ajahn Sumedho,Sumedho (2001). in *Teachings of a Buddhist Monk*, wrote that mindfulness is about a full awareness of what is going on inside; it not necessarily about concentrating on a particular object or thing, because our concentration does not last long. Rather, being *mindful* means allowing for the experience of the moment to arise, whether that experience is confusion, hurt, laughter, or excitement.

Many people equate the concept of mindfulness to Eastern philosophers who look at mindfulness as a process of self-awareness that directs the self to take part in being in the "present moment." This reflective process is nonjudgmental, meaning that mindfulness is accepting whatever is happening. Mindfulness is not *thinking* in terms of categorizing experiences or labeling them; rather, it allows the experiences to just be. It does not associate with the ego—"I," "me," and "mine." Instead, it looks at only the experience(s) in the present moment from an objective stance or that of an observer. In this way, mindfulness provides experiences so profound that it can, and has, changed perspectives and relationships.

Mindfulness has been shown to be effective in innovation and creativity. The phrase "think outside of the box" eludes to mindfulness. To "think outside of the box" means that you cannot categorize, label, or see the issue or object in the same perspective as you did before. You must choose a different way to look at what is in front of you. This would mean that you need to challenge yourself to do things outside of your comfort zone, and, oftentimes, you are doing something you would not even think about doing. In this way, mindfulness is a process, not an outcome.

Culturally intelligent leaders who use mindfulness are generally more open to possibilities and different perspectives. They allow themselves to receive new information even if they believe that what is in front of them is indeed fact or true to them. A state of mindfulness helps to create possibilities and different avenues for growth. Take, for example, the following situation:

2. The capacity of an individual to be fully aware of all that one experiences inside the self (body, mind, heart, and spirit) and to pay full attention to what is happening outside the self (with people, in the natural world and our surroundings, and with events).

Two politicians from opposing parties are in disagreement about actions to take regarding a potential new immigration policy. Both politicians recognize that there is an immigration issue in the country and that it has a significant impact on the economy. Both believe that controlling immigration into the country is the key to maintaining national security and ensures the health and well-being of the country's citizens. One of the politicians believes that a way to control immigration is to round up all illegal immigrants and deport them. The other politician believes that only specific illegal immigrants should return to their country. Enter a third politician who has been listening to the argument. This politician sees both sides of the arguments and recognizes the truth in each statement. As a result of mindful listening, receiving, and reflection, this politician offers a third alternative that may contain components of the two opposing arguments or it could be a completely different way of thinking about immigration.

Mindfulness techniques help you to come to an awareness of your self-efficacy. Through mindfulness, you learn to see your perspective of a situation, whether objects, people, places, or ideas are involved. The connection between mindfulness and self-efficacy is such that when you use mindfulness, it helps you to focus on your performance and goals.

This next exercise is to help you use mindfulness to accomplish a goal. On a piece of paper, write down one goal you have (i.e., "My goal is to..."). This may be related to work, your family, your finances, starting a new business, purchasing a new car—anything you would like to obtain. Below your stated goal, write down five things you plan on doing to achieve this goal. Next, have two people (e.g., friends, neighbors, strangers) each write down five things you can do to achieve this goal. Then, review what you have written down to achieve your goal as well as what others have said for you to do to reach your goal. Now, respond to the following questions:

- How would you react if none of the plans you made turned out the way they were supposed to?
- What if, in the middle of working toward your goal, the goal changed?
- If you reached your goal exactly as you planned it, what would you have learned about yourself?
- What type of life do you think you would lead if everything went according to your plans?

Asking these questions not only helps you to be more mindful, it helps you to be more focused on your goals.

5.5 Mindlessness and Self-Efficacy

We make every effort to keep things as they are, because human beings, alone, lament transience. Yet no matter how we grieve or protest, there is no way to impede the flow of anything. If we but see things as they are and flow with them, we may find enjoyment in transience. Because human life is transient, all manner of figures are woven into its fabric.

- Shundo Aoyama, Zen Seeds

Ellen LangerLanger (1989). wrote that we are all capable of *mindfulness*, as well as its counterpart, *mindlessness*. We subconsciously take part in mindlessness, out of habit or repetition, or out of our own self-placed limitations; however, if we focused on mindfulness, we would, in fact, be able to change our perspective of ourselves, our situations, our environment, or our world. **Mindlessness**[3] can lock us into a specific way of being, thinking, and acting. We are not even aware that we are mindless unless we are in a situation where our mindlessness is challenged or we are conscious of being mindful.

Similar to this concept is the famous analogy of the cave by the Greek philosopher Plato. The analogy describes prisoners chained up in a cave, facing its wall; they have been there all their lives. They can only see shadows of animals, people, or other objects that pass by the entrance of the cave. Because they have never seen the outside of the cave, they do not know what is real except what they see in front of them. In other words, they accept the shadows as reality. However, one person breaks free from the chains and is able to see that the realities of the shadows—the objects, people, or animals behind the shadows—are real. He returns to tell the others about this new reality but is scorned and ridiculed. No one believes that there is another reality besides what they see in front of them.

Mindlessness occurs because we are accustomed to categorizing things in a way that does not allow for alternative possibilities. We automatically think in terms of limitations; therefore, we limit ourselves in our thinking and behavior. For example, a short person who, for all of his life, feels that his height limits and hinders him can never escape the category he has created for himself—that is that he is short. Even if others do not see the same reality as he does, his own reality is so strong that it affects his behavior and, ultimately, his sense of self-worth. It is the same with a woman who has been repeatedly told that she is stupid and worthless. She begins to see that this is the only way to live and starts to act out behaviors that mirror what she has been told.

3. A lack of attention or consciousness.

Mindlessness can then lead to **learned helplessness**[4], a term that describes a state of futility after having experienced multiple failures. For example, if a mother constantly makes her daughter's bed in the morning, and the mother tells her daughter that the only person who can make the bed the correct way is a mother figure, then the daughter will learn that she cannot make her own bed or even that she is incapable of making a bed. What if the mother decides that she no longer wants to make her daughter's bed? The daughter could make her own bed, but she may also reveal that she does not know how to make a bed and that the only person who could make a bed is a mother figure.

Learned helplessness can also appear in cultural interactions. A number of times, I have met people who believe that "working with other cultures is too difficult," and, as a result, their behaviors, their words, and their attitudes speak to this. This mentality perpetuates their behaviors and their inability to escape this learned helplessness. They give up quickly, they make excuses, or they justify their beliefs. By repeating movements, actions, behaviors, words, or thoughts, we enter a state of mindlessness. The tasks we have repeated become an unconscious part of us like driving, brushing our teeth, or eating.

The following exercises will assist you in thinking about how repetitive exercises can contribute to mindlessness and what the consequences of repetitive actions are:

- Recite the alphabet; then, recite the alphabet backwards.
- Sing the words to *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. Next, sing every other word to the song.
- On a piece of paper, write down what you noticed when you recited the alphabet backwards and when you skipped every other word of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*.
- Write a short note to a friend using your dominant hand. Now, using the nondominant hand, write the same short note to a friend. Write down what you noticed when you switched to your nondominant hand.

4. A state of futility that follows the experience of multiple failures.

5.6 Developing Your Self-Efficacy

This section outlines practical approaches you can use in your daily life to help increase your self-efficacy, your emotional intelligence, and your capacity to be mindful.

Identify Moments of Success

You should identify experiences when you have successfully worked with cultures other than your own. You can also cultivate environments where you can be successful. Creating environments to practice and learn from your mistakes is essential for culturally intelligent leaders. When you build a space for others to learn, you encourage their sense of self-efficacy. You help to minimize their doubts about working with others, thus reducing their stress. However, focusing on creating easy successes can foster an environment where the individual comes to expect easy results. Find opportunities that both challenge and create success.

Teach and Promote Resilience

You can create a strong sense of efficacy by purposefully teaching **resiliency**[5]. As a leader, it is about teaching others how they can bounce back from failures. Everyone needs to learn that they have what it takes to be successful in making it through difficulties. You can teach resiliency by promoting and pointing out positive behaviors and attitudes. It is also about helping those you lead to identify when they are using negative self-talk. The following case illustrates a leader teaching and promoting resilience with her employee.

5. The ability to recover from failures.

Theresa, a senior sales manager, knows that a new hire, Jane, is new to working with a Hispanic population. What Jane knows about the population is based on media sources, research and papers she's read, and what she's picked up over time from her social network. Jane has a lot of work ahead of her if she wants to understand and work well with this consumer base.

Theresa provides constructive feedback to Jane in a variety of ways that encourages her to keep her motivation and interest high. She compliments Jane on things she does well and often says, "You're making great progress." Although there are times when Jane just doesn't seem to "get it" as fast as she should, Theresa believes that eventually with training and the proper resources, Jane will succeed. Recently, Jane came back to the office with a big smile on her face. She was able to negotiate and secure a contract with a business in the Hispanic community. Theresa immediately congratulates her. "That's fantastic. Way to go! Tell me all about it."

As Jane recalls the experience, Theresa follows up with questions and prompts to convey her support and enthusiasm. When Jane recalls a minor setback in her conversation with the business, Theresa says, "Wait now. Don't underestimate what you were able to do. That's a minor issue and I know that if you secured the contract you must have adequately addressed that with the client."

Jane hesitates, and then nods her head. "You're right. I did. He seemed real relaxed after I explained it to him."

Theresa notices the hesitation. To ensure that Jane realizes her good effort paid off, Theresa says, "Good work! Now that you've had this experience, what lessons learned can you take to your next sales opportunity?"

Theresa provides teaching moments of resiliency to Jane. As a culturally intelligent leader should, she is helping Jane learn the value of not giving up in the face of difficulty. She also points out the negative self-talk (verbal and nonverbal) that Jane slips into the conversation. Theresa ends the conversation on a positive note, continuing to show interest and support of Jane's progress.

As Theresa is teaching Jane, she also learns about her own resiliency. Working with Jane is a new cultural experience for her: She is working with someone who is

unfamiliar with certain aspects of her job and the consumers. As a person with many responsibilities, and one holding a position of leadership and authority in the organization, Theresa does not have a lot of time to manage Jane. Yet Theresa makes it a goal of hers to encourage and mentor Jane through the initial growing phase. Theresa's resilience, her perseverance, and her perception of her own abilities in relation to the situation help her keep her motivation and interest high.

Provide Social Role Models

When you see someone who is successful and has accomplished the same goal as you, even in the face of resistance, you are more apt to believe that you, too, can accomplish those same goals. You believe that you have the abilities to master the tasks required to reach your goals. This is why finding a role model or mentor who is similar to you can help build your self-efficacy. If you are leading a team or department, you can find **social role models**[6] to encourage your employees to build their self-esteem.

Self-efficacy increases when you are able to relate to your role model or mentor.Bandura (1994). If you surround yourself in cultural interactions with people who are not successful, even if you try very hard to be motivated in these challenges, this will undermine your efforts. Finding someone who has overcome cultural challenges will greatly benefit you. For example, read the following story about Tom, David, and Raj:

6. An individual who is successful, has accomplished a goal—even in the face of resistance and who serves as a model of the abilities needed to master the tasks to reach a goal.

Tom and David both lead sales departments for separate divisions of their manufacturing company. In the past two months, both have traveled frequently and separately to India to work with a new division of customer service representatives who work with their respective departments. Ever since their boss informed them of this new venture, Tom and David have had separate emotions and experiences related to the new business situation.

Tom's been less enthusiastic and interested in the project. Having never been out of the country and working only nationally, he's hesitant and less thrilled than David about the new division and what it would entail. Similarly, David's never been out of the country, but he has, over time, cultivated interest in cultural experiences different from his own. He has intentionally taken part in different intercultural events at local and national levels. He can't wait to get started on the project.

Raj, their division supervisor, knows the abilities of each member of her staff. She requires them to purchase books and resources to help them learn about the local Indian culture. She's even enrolled them in a language and culture class. She knows that Tom has been more reluctant to try new things. David seems to be gaining momentum and retaining more information that he's learned compared to Tom. She notices the difference and thinks that Tom could learn from David.

Both have worked together closely in the past and share similar career and personal goals. Raj capitalizes on the relationship by building in a mentor-mentee component. She speaks to both of them about this new piece to their working relationship and receives an agreement and support from both. She also manages the relationship closely, ensuring that during this time Tom gets what he needs to be a culturally intelligent leader and that David receives mentorship and guidance from her. In this way, they're working as partners, each serving as role models and mentors to another person.

As a leader, Raj is able to identify intercultural competency areas where Tom and David can both benefit. Raj knows that Tom needs support to boost his confidence level when working across cultures. She also knows that David has the self-confidence but needs assistance in understanding cultural facts. By building strategies that are appropriate for each person, she builds her team's cultural intelligence. In the end, she learns about her own ability to work with two managers who have different individual cultural experiences.

Lead by Example

If you are able to manage and interact with different cultures more easily than your staff or employees are, model the way for them to understand how they could improve their own self-efficacies. Through your behaviors, your beliefs, and your thinking, you demonstrate, by example, the skills and knowledge they need to manage cultural environments. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner,Kouzes & Posner (2002). in *The Leadership Challenge*, found that leaders should establish principles that guide people to reach their goals. Because a small shift or change could be overwhelming for some, helping them to set short, interim goals can help them to achieve larger goals. Modeling the way by identifying the barriers, being resourceful, and creating opportunities for your own success helps others to see their own abilities succeed. Take, for example, the case of Jaime and Anne:

Jaime is in her late 20s. She serves as the director of a civic engagement program in a nonprofit organization. Anne is in her late 50s and manages the program, reporting directly to Jaime. They've worked together for the past three years fairly well. They have their disagreements but overall have a healthy working relationship.

In the last year, the board of directors has changed the nature of the program to incorporate civic engagement and service learning principles. As a result, an increasing amount of volunteers in the program are college and high school students. Jamie notices that Anne has difficulty working with a younger generation of volunteers. She doesn't respond to them the way she responds to volunteers who are in her age group. Sometimes, Anne will make side comments about the younger generations' work ethics saying, "They're so unreliable" and "I don't know why they don't just pick up the phone to talk to me. It's like they don't know how to leave a message on voicemail anymore." She's even said these comments to her 55+ volunteers, who readily agree about the generational differences.

Jaime knows that Anne needs to be able to work with volunteers of all ages and cultural backgrounds. She's seen the negative impacts of Anne's behavior. Many of the younger volunteers come to Jamie if they have problems or issues when they should be going to Anne who directly manages them. They've expressed that Jaime is "more like them" and understands them. Although Jamie doesn't mind helping the volunteers with their questions, it's taking her away from her role and responsibilities as a leader of the department. Additionally, it's setting a tone for how Anne works and reshaping her job duties.

To resolve this, Jaime speaks with Anne about the issue. Anne doesn't see a problem with how she's handling the situation with younger volunteers. Jaime disagrees and at the end of the meeting, both agree to a plan that helps Anne to work more effectively with volunteers of any cultural background. Jamie and Anne work together to set goals that are achievable and work toward the long-term goals of the organization. Jaime finds opportunities to compliment Anne when she is successful and helps Anne to identify strategies that help her do her work more efficiently.

Jaime continues to work with Anne in the months to come. She's patient and believes that Anne will be able to adapt; however, after two years, Jaime decides to let Anne go because the situation does not change.

It is important to recognize that there are times that no matter how much you try to model the way for employees and others, it does not work out to the benefit of the organization. In the example of Jamie and Anne, after 2 years of Jaime modeling the way and helping Anne, the progress was not significant enough to make the change that was needed. There was still resistance on Anne's part. After much reflection and evaluation, Jaime decided to let Anne go. The cost of low self-efficacy affects not only Anne but also the program and the organization's overall goals.

Support Others in Their Self-Efficacy Development

As any leader should, it is important to support your staff, co-workers, and the organization to strengthen their self-efficacy. You can do this in several ways:

- Verbally tell them that they are making progress.
- Have evaluation or reflection sessions about the progress.
- Provide them with the right resources.
- Tell them to keep trying and to sustain their efforts.
- Know when to give feedback and what type of feedback to provide.

If you are looking to develop your own self-efficacy, then you need to put in systems that will help you. For example, find the role models and proper support mechanisms to ensure you do not fail. Finding support is important because your support system helps to minimize your attention on weaknesses; they provide constructive feedback to help you develop professionally.

Emphasize Self-Improvement

Unfamiliar cultural interactions are challenging, and you should look at your success and failures as personal and professional development. There will be times when you will be involved in cultural misunderstandings, make "cultural bloopers," or take part in a cultural conflict. This is just a part of the process of navigating through cultural terrain. When this happens, you need to focus on the value of self-improvement. Do not berate yourself over the mistake; learn to "learn and let go." When it is an employee who makes the mistake, do not compare them to others; rather, set a standard for improvement within cultural interactions and help the

employee to get there. Notice how Jodi felt about herself in the following case study:

Jodi is a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technician. She's been in the field for ten years and works with a variety of patients from different cultural backgrounds. One day, an African woman, Aziza, her son, Guleed, and her husband, Hussein, comes into the clinic for an MRI. The son accompanies his parents and interprets as needed because, although they understand English, they have difficulty speaking it.

Jodi calls the patient to the MRI room. Her co-worker, Melinda, assists her with the preparations and is with her in the room. Jodi prepares for the MRI by giving Aziza instructions, "You will lie down on the machine. You need to be very still or we have to start over." Jodi then turns to Guleed and speaks slowly, "Can you tell your mother that she needs to be very still when she's in there?"

Guleed understands and explains the MRI procedures to his mother. He then says to Jodi, "My mother has done this before. She had an MRI three years ago. She knows what to do."

"Okay," Jodi says. Again, her next instructions to Guleed are spoken in a slow pace, "Does she need medication to help her with staying still?"

Guleed shakes his head. "She's fine. She's done this before."

Jodi then turns to Aziza and says very slowly, "If you need help or to call us, you push this button." Her gestures to the family are overly emphasized when pointing to the call button. "Can you tell her to push this button if she needs help?" Guleed, looking more frustrated as the instructions are dictated, nods his head and explains to his mother.

After the MRI, Jodi courteously thanks the family and says, "You all did a very good job. Have a good rest of your day." The family quickly walks out and Guleed gives a slight smile in response.

Jodi and Melinda return to their work, and Jodi says "That family was interesting. It was so nice of that boy to come with his parents to interpret, don't you think?"

Melinda turns to Jodi and replies, "Yes, it was a good thing that he was there." She hesitates and then says, "But you know, you probably didn't need to talk like that to them."

With surprise, Jodi says, "Talk like what?"

"You were talking really slowly to them. It seemed like they didn't appreciate it. The son knew English very well and was fine interpreting and understanding what you told him."

Jodie replies, "Oh. But in that class we took the trainer said we should talk slow and not use big words so they can understand us. That's what I was doing. I mean, she probably didn't know what I was talking about so I had to talk slow to help her understand."

"Yeah, that's true but you were really dramatic about it. They're not deaf. They just have a harder time grasping the language."

Jodi pauses and then says, "You're right. How embarrassing! I hope they don't think badly of me. I was just trying to get them to understand what they needed to do. Next time I'll do it differently."

Jodi tries to apply what she has learned in **cultural competency**[7] training, yet she is not able to apply the learning in a way that is appropriate to different racial and ethnic groups. This is evident when her colleague, Melinda, informs her that she thought Jodi used the wrong cultural competency tools. Jodi's instant emotional response was to be offended and to feel guilty for her intercultural mistakes. However, she realizes that her experience and mistake will only improve her ability to work better with different cultures.

Jodi can use the CI principles to help her in the following way:

Acquire: In this case study, Jodi has good intentions to be respectful of another culture. But what she is not picking up on are the verbal and nonverbal cues of her environment. If Jodi can identify what she did well and where she could improve, she can better assess her level of understanding culture in this situation. Jodi has worked with families of different backgrounds, but it seems as if no one has told her

7. The ability to successfully interact with individuals of different cultural backgrounds.

that she was unintentionally creating an uncomfortable environment for those families. To acquire information about culture that can be helpful to her in future situations she can start with recognizing what cultural facts and knowledge she may already have. For example, she speaks slower to this family so they can understand. Yet she needs to know that not all families need to be spoken to in this manner.

Build: If Jodi can take the knowledge she has, speaking slower in English can help those who are not English native speakers, and combine this with the knowledge that not all non-English speakers need to be spoken to in this way, then she will begin to build her awareness for when speaking slowly would be appropriate. When she does this, she is creating new information and making new sense of the cultural information.

Contemplate: Even though Jodi is familiar working with families of different cultures, she can always approach the situations with new lenses or perspectives. By asking herself what she sees and does not see in the situation, she can shift her mindset from one that treats all families the same to one that treats them as unique. Contemplation requires Jodi to reflect on her biases as well as the unintentional consequences that come about because of her need to be culturally appropriate.

Do: As she practices the strategies she creates for each family situation, she will learn what works and does not work for each family. She may even be surprised that she is adapting and changing her behaviors with every family she treats, even if the families share similar cultural backgrounds and interests. The more she practices and evaluates, the more she will reduce her need to be perfect in every cultural situation. Instead, she will learn that her mistakes become cultural lessons in practice.

Reduce Anxiety and Stress Related to Cultural Interactions

When we feel we are capable of accomplishing a goal, we have positive emotions. When we know that we do not have the abilities to accomplish the goal, our emotions and mood for the activity are less positive. How we feel can be a deterrent to our success by affecting our attitudes and perceptions of who we are and how we will achieve our goals. Our negative moods can create stress, anxiety, frustration, and fear—all which do not serve you in intercultural work. As a leader, you should help support strategies that reduce the stress and anxiety related to unfamiliar cultural situations. And, if you are the one who gets anxious, stressed out, or disinterested, you should find strategies that work for you. The following are some

tips for reducing stress and anxiety related to unfamiliar cultural settings that can bring about a more positive outlook:

- *Keep a stress journal*. Use the journal as a way to track your physical and emotional responses to unfamiliar cultural settings. As you write out your feelings, you will begin to see common themes and patterns in your behavior. When you can identify what makes you stressed and how you typically respond, you can find the appropriate strategies to reduce your stress level.
- *Keep a gratitude journal*. When we are stressed and our anxiety is high, we often cannot see the opportunities and positive outcomes in intercultural relationships. Keeping a gratitude journal enables us to identify the pieces of the relationship or the situation that contributes positively back to our self-development, even though, at the time, we may think it is the worst thing to have happened. Writing down a few things you are grateful for in the situation helps to shift your mind-set and calm your physical and emotional state.
- *Break your goal into smaller, manageable steps*. For example, if you need to learn a new language and culture but it seems overwhelming, break that goal into smaller tasks over time. Do not take on more than you can handle. If the time does not allow for it, ask your supervisor for support and ideas to make it more manageable.
- *Express your feelings and emotions in a healthy manner*. For example, you need to be able to communicate your feelings and thoughts to your supervisor. Your concerns should be expressed in a respectful manner. If you do not share your concerns with your supervisor, you will build resentment and emotional clutter around the situation. If this continues over time, you build unhealthy habitual patterns and responses every time you are in unfamiliar territory.
- *Be willing to compromise and let go*. Working with cultures means that you have to be adaptable and willing to let go of what you know. You have to be flexible or else you are always going to have problems that frustrate, disappoint, and anger you.
- *Stay calm and focused on the task*. The more anxious you are, the more you visualize and paint a picture that creates more stress for you. According to Bandura,Bandura (1994). your stress level can impair how you function inter- and intrapersonally. Staying calm and focused helps you decrease your stress and anxiety.
- *Recognize that you cannot control culture*. Culturally intelligent leaders know that culture cannot be controlled. It is ever changing, never static. You have to recognize that there are times in cultural situations that you cannot anticipate, no matter how much you have trained, read resources, or lived in the culture. As in life, there are many things that are out of our control. We cannot expect that our intentions will

always have the impact we envision it to be. This is why focusing on the things we can control, such as our adaptive responses to another person or culture, is better than stressing about what we cannot control.

- *Be willing to forgive*. People make mistakes. At times, people are not aware of what they have said or the implications of what they have done. When it comes to cultural intelligence, you have to be willing to forgive others both for what they are conscious and not conscious of doing, saying, or feeling. If you cannot forgive, you are going to have a hard time working with unfamiliar cultural environments.
- *Keep your sense of humor*. Working interculturally can be both tiring and exhilarating. There will be times when you make mistakes and feel disappointed for not picking up the cues or for not "knowing what to do." Keeping a sense of humor about culture lessens the stress. You have to be able to laugh at yourself; otherwise, the challenges of cultural differences become too much to bear.

I once consulted with an organization that had a tool called "The Wizard." This tool helped organizations to be more accountable and transparent in their use of charitable donations. They wanted to expand their tool to a diverse audience. In a session focused on thinking about how the tool could be more accessible, it struck us that, in one of the languages, the word "wizard" translated into "Shaman." In this community, the shaman happens to be someone who is wise and connects with the spirit world. Can you imagine going into the community and talking about how "the shaman" will help you to be more accountable? We all laughed, and we also used this as an opportunity to discuss the challenges of accessibility.

5.7 Chapter Summary

- Interactions within cultures are based on a person's sense of efficacy, which is their belief about their abilities to perform what is required in new cultural settings.
- Culturally intelligent leaders have higher levels of self-efficacy. They look at challenges as opportunities, they are resilient and persistent in their pursuance of the goal, they have higher confidence levels, and they are committed to finding solutions.
- Individuals who have low self-efficacy have lower expectations of themselves in new cultural settings, they lose interest and commitment under duress, and they focus on doubts and negative outcomes.
- Emotional intelligence speaks to the importance of self-efficacy in leadership; it points out the critical role self-efficacy has on managing one's emotions, adaptability, and optimism.
- Mindfulness brings about creativity and innovation. It takes leaders "out of their boxes" and gives them a new way of perceiving themselves, their abilities, and their world.
- Mindlessness comes about through repetitive behaviors. Mostly unconsciously, a state of mindlessness can lead to learned helplessness.
- Research has shown that you can improve your self-efficacy, and the chapter highlights areas for leadership development.