

ORIENTATION NOTEBOOK

Mission Development Staff



Baptist General Association of Virginia

Partners

Partnership Missions is not only a way of being the Body of Christ, it is an investment. When we make ourselves available to serve Christ at home or abroad we invest in the Lord's Kingdom. We help each other reach the world for Christ in word and deed.

Secondly we invest in our partners. We show them they are not alone, but rather part of God's big family. With love and support we build them up; we let them know we care enough about them to be with them and to work together. In mutual respect and with a learning attitude, our gifts complement each other.

We invest in ourselves, thirdly. A mission partnership or project is a greenhouse for our faith. We can focus on service and Christian fellowship without the distraction of the normal responsibilities of home and work. Our trust in God grows as we experience God carrying us through new challenges, uncertainty or cultural differences.

We also invest in ourselves by learning from others. We receive partners' insights from outside our regular environment and benefit from their gifts. Partnership includes mutuality, and we need our partners as much as we need them.

Fourthly we invest in our home church. When we go out to serve the Lord and come home as more experienced and mature followers of Christ, our church is strengthened. We have new eyes for opportunities at home, and new hearts for those around us.

Thank You!

Thank you for being part of what we are doing together! Virginia Baptists have entered into a missions covenant with our partners, and you are helping to respond to the call for fellowship and mutual support. You are making real that unity of the Body of Christ for which our Lord prayed.

Getting Connected

Sometimes volunteers have suggestions for ministry, or skills to offer, that have not been requested. We can take your suggestion to our partners and find a meaningful need to meet your service.

How does your team get connected with a partnership mission experience?

- Call the Mission Development Staff at 1-800-255-2428, or e-mail Craig.Waddell@bgav.org . Let's talk about the project and/or relationship which interests you. Once you've chosen a project, we will supply you with the application packet. Craig will also arrange a date for the team orientation.
- Paula.Washburn@bgav.org will work with the team leader to make sure your team has everything you need for the mission trip.

Be Spiritually Prepared

Your missions experience is a journey with your team, a journey with your partners where you will serve, but most of all it is a journey with God. What will you experience with God on this journey? Are you even curious about that? Are you looking forward to "making memories" with God which will feed your faith even after you come back home?

Do you see your missions experience as a special opportunity to grow together with others from your church? This experience can be a strong asset for the ministry of your church!

The spiritual preparation begins even before you leave home. If you want to serve Christ with joy and a free heart, if you want to be attuned to God's leadership, if you want to draw from the Holy Spirit's help in dealing with stressful situations, then you will want to have nothing standing between God and yourself. This means cultivating your relationship to God in advance of the mission trip.

As a team, study Scripture or work through a devotional book together before the mission trip. Not only will you get to know each other better, but you will also become more practiced in putting Christ first in your dealings with each other. You will grow in praying together in the face of challenges, and lifting each other up and forgiving one another.

There are many preparation guides for teams. A good one is Tim Dearborn's [Short Term Missions: From Missions Tourists to Global Citizens](#) (ISBN 0-8308-3233-5).

"Flexibility" is one of the most important words in your preparation. We should all do our best to prepare effectively for the missions experience. However the project often unfolds differently than planned. Remember that we go in order to serve. The Lord will use in a significant way your willingness to serve - this is part of your spiritual preparation.

Who is on your team?

Often we think of the team as the ones who travel to another place to serve. However the mission team consists of those who "Send" you, the ones who "Go," as well as those who will "Receive" the team! By making it possible for you to go, your church, family, and friends are also responding to God's call to serve our partners.

Involve your church in your spiritual, emotional and logistical preparation. After all, it is not just your team's project, it is your church's project. The ones who stay at home are just as important as the ones who get on the plane! They need to know that and also take it seriously.

Wherever you are going, God is already there, working through the local church – so the partners receiving you are also part of the team. In fact your team is going in order to be the "back-up singers" for that local church's ministry in its community. Anything you do should be perceived as a ministry of that local church.

A visual challenge and practical guide for relating to all the members of your team is the “MISTM Grid”:

| Adapted from <i>Maximum Impact Short Term Mission</i> (Peterson, 2003) | Before the trip | During the trip | After the trip |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Senders | | | |
| Goers | | | |
| Receivers | | | |

Each box represents the ways you are praying, planning and implementing the mission experience. How are you engaging with the other team members in ways that reflect a relationship, rather than just a one-time project? How is the mission trip an expression of global community and discipleship, rather than simply a church activity?

Culture

Serving in a different culture means working with people who have a different way of understanding and talking about the world. It is a valuable part of self-reflection: it helps us understand how much our own culture has influenced our faith. It is also a challenge because there are constantly opportunities for misunderstandings and communication breakdowns.

It is important to be aware of cultural differences and to develop cultural intelligence. This will help our relationships grow deep and our ministry be more effective. A good cross-cultural primer is Sarah Lanier’s *Foreign to Familiar* (ISBN 1-58158-022-3). A more in-depth resource is David Livermore’s *Cultural Intelligence* (ISBN 0801035899). For a brief overview of some basic cultural issues, see also the document at the end of this booklet.

A common cultural difference which often causes misunderstanding has to do with the project-oriented volunteer mission culture in North America. When practical North Americans enter into a partnership, we often agree to a project in the hope that a relationship will develop. For many of our partners, they are agreeing to a relationship out of which a project might develop.

Partnership Mission Costs

The cost of a partnership mission project usually consists of the travel packet and in-country expenses.

How are the in-country expenses calculated?

Together with the partner, we determine a reasonable maximum daily expense requirement which includes food, lodging and transportation. Usually the team leader or a team treasurer manages this money for the team, paying for meals, hotel rooms, etc. In the case of a large group, the team leader sometimes chooses to distribute meal money to the individual volunteers.

In some cases the Mission Development Staff can transfer the in-country expense money to the partner out in the field by wiring it. This saves the team from having to carry large sums of money while traveling. However this is not always possible, in which case the team has to carry the money with them.

What does the travel packet consist of?

- Airfare varies greatly, but typically the earlier one books the ticket, the cheaper the ticket is. For groups with ten or more travelers our travel agent can sometimes reserve tickets without names, giving the team leader some time to finalize the team's volunteer list.
- Missionary travel insurance with Gallagher Charitable Insurance is \$3.30 per day. This does not include trip interruption and cancellation insurance. See the page in this guide related to travel insurance for more information.
- Partner Support Fund - \$30. This money is kept in reserve for various expenses we cover for our partners. For example our partners normally supply a person to accompany the VA Baptist team during the project. We cover this person's expenses during time away from regular work. Another example is that in some partnerships it is necessary to purchase a vehicle in the partner country.

Additional Expenses

1. Expenses related to obtaining a passport and a visa, if one is needed.
2. Cost of transportation to and from the U.S. airport, as well as food in the airport.
3. Expenses related to immunizations recommended by personal physician.
4. Excess baggage charges.
6. Airport fees: Some countries charge an "exit fee" to leave the country.
7. Medical expenses.

Travel Insurance Information

We require that all volunteers have Voluntary Missionary Travel Insurance through Gallagher Charitable Insurance Solutions - www.travelwithgallagher.com/

This plan has been specifically designed to meet your needs and is available only for volunteers while on active service for 1-150 days. The supplemental coverage provides a basic level of health and injury insurance, accidental death and dismemberment, permanent total disability and property insurance. This coverage is not intended to replace any personal insurance you may have.

Gallagher works with Intana, an excellent 24-hour emergency medical service headquartered in London, England. If there is a medical emergency during your trip, call Intana (collect, if needed) using the phone number (+44 207 902 7149) provided with the insurance information. Contact the Mission Development Staff immediately as well, so we can help.

Intana will immediately contact the hospital and physician where you are being treated. If it is determined that you need treatment at home, they will fly a registered nurse to you, who will accompany you back home to your hospital, door-to-door.

Travel Documents

Your Passport: Check the passport validity requirements for the country you are visiting! It must be valid at least 3-6 months beyond your intended stay.

A Visa: The Travel Documents Services web site (www.traveldocs.com) has a good overview of the entry requirements for most countries in the world. The Mission Development Staff can help obtain a visa for you if one is required. If you need a visa, your passport must be mailed to BGAV at the following address at least **45 days in advance of your trip:**

Baptist General Association of Virginia
Attn: Paula Washburn
2828 Emerywood Pkwy
Henrico, VA 23294

Once you are on your trip, all travel documents should remain in your physical possession at all times. Upon arrival on the field, ask your field coordinator about security for your travel documents.

Passport

By international convention, a U.S. passport is a document issued by the U.S. government and addressed to foreign powers. It certifies the person described in the document is a citizen of the United States. It also requests permission for the bearer, while abroad, to move freely as well as receive lawful aid and protection.

A passport is a rather limited document. It does not give Americans rights to U.S. constitutional guarantees or any special treatment under foreign law when they travel. It is a universal identity document for U.S. travelers wishing to register at hotels, make credit card purchases, buy local currency or rent a car. Perhaps most importantly, it is a guarantee for you and a notice to foreign authorities that the U.S. Embassy has an interest if you are in trouble.

Make copies of your passport, including a copy of the page with your visa on it if you are in a country which requires a visa. Leave a copy with someone at home who could fax it to you if needed. Place another copy somewhere in your luggage. If your passport is lost, there is no guarantee the copy will help you. However in the past it has proven helpful and expeditious to be able to present a copy of the lost passport to airport staff or embassy officials.

If your host country's immigration department issues to you an entrance form to fill out, keep whatever portion they return to you. If they tear off half and give half back to you, clip it into your passport. If they stamp the form upon entry and give it back to you, clip it into your passport. **They are going to ask for it when you leave the country!** If you cannot produce the portion they require, it may significantly delay your departure.

Travel Registration

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. Registration allows you to record information about your upcoming trip abroad that the Department of State can use to assist you in case of an emergency. Americans residing abroad can also get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Visit their web site at <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Money

Please do not assume traveler's checks will always work! Different countries have different experiences – in South Africa, American Express Traveler's Checks are great for exchanging in the airport upon arrival; in Italy, by contrast, getting traveler's checks cashed is a time-consuming hassle, if you can even find a place that will cash them.

Credit cards work well with most of our partners for purchases and ATM withdrawals, but not with all of them. This will be covered in your team's orientation. Be aware that cash withdrawals often incur a 3-5% bank fee.

Communicate to your bank where you will be traveling so your card does not get “frozen” due to international activity on your account. Many countries also require a card with electronic chip and four-digit PIN when you use a credit card.

Air Travel

Checking In: Before you leave for the airport, it is a good idea to check with the airline to make sure your flight is on schedule. Most airlines ask travelers to begin the check-in process a minimum of 2 hours before domestic flights and at least **3 hours before international flights** to allow for tighter security procedures. Each person must show government-issued photo identification, such as driver's license or a passport, during check-in and prior to boarding.

Security Checkpoints: Under new boarding rules, you may only go past a security checkpoint and on to an airline gate if you have proof of a reservation to fly the same day.

Due to more rigorous scrutiny at checkpoints, the FAA advises you to limit the amount of metal you wear, and to remove objects such as jewelry, car keys, and coins before you pass through the metal detector.

All electronic items, such as laptops and cell phones, are subject to additional inspection. You may be asked, for example, to remove your laptop from its travel case and to turn it on.

Wear shoes which can be put on and taken off easily; you may be asked to remove shoes for inspection. Expect frequent random security checks as well as increased scrutiny by authorities and airport personnel at parking lots, curbside, ticket counters, security gates, airport gates, and on the plane. PLEASE DO WHATEVER YOU ARE ASKED TO DO!

Regarding luggage: With rising fuel costs, some airlines have reduced the weight allowance per bag to 50 lbs. Also, inland flights in some countries have greater restrictions than the international flights. It's good to check with the travel agent each time you travel about your specific route and air carriers!

International Free Luggage Allowance: **Check your airline's website for current luggage allowance and bag dimensions.** Many airlines have reduced the allowance to just one checked bag.

Travelers are generally limited to one carry-on bag, plus one additional personal item (handbag, camera, etc.), and "special items."

To determine what you may and may not pack in your bags, please check the website of the Transportation Security Administration at <https://www.tsa.gov/travel>

Medicines

Pack a medical kit for yourself. Someone should also take an extra medical kit for the team. In your personal kit, include what you normally need in an emergency. Often we can anticipate what illness we are likely get. Therefore take with you what you normally need for your typical illnesses. Consult your doctor about taking an antibiotic with you just in case of sinus infections, traveler's diarrhea, etc.

Put your medicines in their original packages, if at all possible. Customs officials frown upon unidentified collections of loose pills. Don't put important medications in your checked bags. Take them with you in your carry-on!

Driving

Volunteers may not drive while on a partnership mission project. This is for their protection, as well as to avoid insurance and liability issues. The written (and unwritten) traffic laws and customs of the host countries are complex, and prosecution of those laws can be complicated and even arbitrary. It is therefore not worth the risk during a short-term mission trip.

While Traveling

- Take your cell phone with you, even if you know it won't work outside the U.S. You can use it to let your family and the Mission Development Staff know when you have a flight schedule change, miss a flight, or have an emergency, etc.
- If your group is departing from different locations, make sure you all have cell phones, as well as the phone numbers for all the team members. This way you can communicate in case there are emergency decisions to be made.
- If there is an itinerary change, if you miss a flight, or if your flight is delayed, call the Mission Development Staff so we can call your team's stateside contact person. Let us know so that when your family calls us, we know what to tell them.
- When you arrive at your destination, let your family know you have arrived safely.
- A general guideline when traveling is, "Any step closer to your destination is good." Sometimes an airline will suggest or even pressure you to get off a plane because you would not make your next connecting flight anyway. Beware: Once you get off the plane, the airline might no longer feel obligated to help you. However if you stay on the plane and get stuck at the next airport, they will be obligated to help you. If you are "in transit" and in front of their desk - in other words if they are stuck with you -they are more likely to try and get you onto an alternative flight.
- The team leader must give the Mission Development Staff contact information for someone in the U.S. who will contact the volunteers' families if there is an emergency, or if there is vital information to be passed on.

Telephone Cards & Cell Phones

In many countries U.S. telephone cards do not work, even if the card is sold as an "international" calling card. The best bet is to buy a calling card upon arrival in your host country. Make sure it is the right card for calling the U.S.A.

Cell phones generally do not work outside the U.S. unless you have an international plan. Most providers have a short-term international solution for around \$10/day.

Vaccinations

You can find the required vaccinations at www.traveldocs.com, under "Entry Requirements." BGAV does not require vaccinations that are not required by the country being entered, so you should check the sources which recommend what you need. Speak with your county health department, or consult the Centers for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov>, and MDTravelhealth at <http://www.mdtravelhealth.com>, and then make a decision with your physician.

It is always good to have current tetanus and hepatitis A vaccinations, even if you are not traveling outside the United States.

Packing

Don't take too much! The place you are going might not have large cars for carrying volunteers and a lot of luggage. There also might not be an elevator where you are staying. You might have to walk a significant distance to your lodging, and there will not be someone to carry your luggage.

Remember the 3-1-1 Rule! Any fluid or gel in your carry-on must be in a container that will hold no more than 3 ounces. All of these 3 ounce containers must fit into 1 clear, reclosable, 1 quart plastic baggie. In other words, 3-1-1.

Gifts for your host

If you stay in someone's home you would probably like to take them a gift from Virginia. It should not be extravagant – you do not want to make your host feel obligated to give you a gift. You also do not want to flaunt your disposable income, especially in a country where the economy forces people to concentrate on the more important things in life.

Even if you stay in a guest house or hotel, you will certainly make new friends, or there might be someone who spends a lot of time with your team, guiding and helping you. In that case you might also like to have a couple gifts "in reserve" which you can present toward the end of your stay.

You could visit a Virginia Store and see what they have, or pick up a small pictorial tour of Virginia. Perhaps your church has copies of a nice picture of the church, which you could sign. Take a picture of the team in front of the church before you leave, and frame the picture. The possibilities for good mementos to leave behind are endless.

Regarding pictures: Make sure you take along pictures from home! This is one of the best conversation starters, and conversation "maintainers" if there is a language barrier! Take pictures of family, pets, church, hobbies, etc.

Team Leader Info Sheet

Ideally your team leader, or someone designated for the team, should compile an info sheet for each volunteer. This would include the medical info (see above), passport number and contact information for your family.

Please provide your team leader with your vital medical information, so she/he has this information if something happens to you and you cannot speak for yourself. Include age, blood type, allergies (also allergies to medications), pre-existing conditions (heart trouble, epilepsy, etc.) and medications you take regularly (blood pressure, blood thinner, insulin).

The team leader should give the Mission Development Staff the contact information for someone in the States who is going to communicate with the volunteers' families in case of an emergency. This person also makes it possible for you to let all the families know you arrived safely, by making only one phone call.

The team also needs to set up a "telephone tree" at home, before they leave. There should be one person who has all the contact information for the entire team - that way the team only has to notify one person in the U.S. if there is an emergency or a flight schedule change.

The team leader should treat the information in the notebook as confidential!

Travel Tips

- On the flight(s) overseas, drink plenty of fluids and walk regularly. This will hydrate you and give you the opportunity to stretch your legs.
- Be a flexible, team player, learning as you go along.
- Carry important information in a secured pouch tucked under your clothing. Insurance cards, money, passport, personal ID, and phone numbers including the name of your host, host church and/or hotel.
- Give inexpensive gifts to your friends and hosts as you leave; this avoids creating pressure to reciprocate. If you are given gifts, accept them graciously.
- Pack a complete change of clothing, all medications, and other essentials in your carry-on in case of a luggage delay.
- Have healthy snack foods and light reading materials available for unexpected delays.
- Keep luggage keys on you or use combination locks.
- Learn as much as possible before you depart about the geography, customs, and history of the country you will visit.
- Make and give copies of all your important travel and medical documents both to your team leader and your family members/friends.
- Medication dosages and instructions should be in original containers and clearly marked on the label. Inform your team leader of any chronic medical condition you have and make him/her aware of where your medicines are kept at all times.
- Travel light - you bring it, you will have to carry it! Luggage on wheels is helpful.
- **Never Go Out Alone!**

Guidelines for Using an Interpreter

You will discover that interpreters possess varying degrees of skills depending on their: a.) grasp of the English language; and b.) experience in actually serving as an interpreter. But no matter what degree of skill an interpreter possesses, you can improve that skill by following certain guidelines. Remember that you are communicating in your way, but the interpreter is attempting to communicate while understanding **YOUR** language.

1. Speak distinctly, but do not exaggerate the pronunciation or the slowness.
2. If necessary, repeat the idea using other words. Repeating words which the person does not understand does not help.
3. Do not raise your voice if you are not understood.
4. Be patient and appreciative.
5. If possible, share with your interpreter the information you will use before going into action. Try not to surprise your interpreter.

6. Identify any printed materials you propose to use, such as a tract and the scriptures you expect to read or refer to during your presentation.
7. Point out to the interpreter in advance any points you want to stress so that he or she can place the emphasis on those points in harmony with you.
8. Identify in advance any unusual or difficult words or numbers you intend to use to give the interpreter time to develop the translation correctly. When the English words you choose do not have corresponding meanings in their language, select substitute words which can be translated.
9. Some interpreters prefer that you say a complete sentence, others prefer shorter units of thought.
10. Avoid jokes, poems, hymns, long stories, idioms, alliterations, metaphors, difficult names, and rambling statements. Stick to essential content and place emphasis on clarity rather than on beauty of language. Use literal meaning of words. Do not use idiomatic sayings like “the middle of nowhere,” “out on a limb,” or “a shot in the arm”.
11. When given ten minutes to share a testimony, plan to speak a total of five minutes and allow five minutes for interpretation. It takes twice as long to speak because of the translation.
12. Face the people, not the interpreter.
13. Do not publicly compliment your interpreter. He or she cannot brag on himself, and that is the position you place him/her in when you attempt a compliment in public. Share your praise privately.

Important Mission Development Staff Numbers

Daytime:

Toll-free: 1-800-255-2428; Direct: 1-804-915-5000, ask for an extension:

Ext. 7263 Craig Waddell Craig.Waddell@bgav.org

Ext. 7260 Paula Washburn Paula.Washburn@bgav.org

Ext. 7219 Dean Miller Dean.Miller@bgav.org

If your family should have an emergency at home while you are out of the country, their first point of contact should be the Mission Development Staff.

Evening/Weekend Numbers:

Craig Waddell mobile (804) 921-5604

Dean Miller mobile (804) 921-3992, home (804) 754-3179

IN EMERGENCIES

Medical Emergency: Specialty Assist

24 Hour Service – call +44 207 902 7149

Bringing Our Partners to Virginia

We need our partners just as much as they need us. Each year, volunteers from our international partners come to Virginia to help us with our projects. These projects have included preaching, children's ministries, community outreach, construction and cultural exchanges.

Your church can request a volunteer team from our partners to help you in your ministry at home. For example, why not ask a team from another country to help your church with vacation Bible school next year? You would have extra workers, special guests in your homes and church, and they could lead activities which focus on their country. Or Bible study groups and church circles could use them to invite friends and neighbors to church events they otherwise might not attend.

Our volunteers typically pay their own travel expenses, as do our partners. Often, though, it is a great help to our partners if you can host them once they get here. They pay their own flights and travel, as well as any sightseeing they might do with you, and the host church provides homes and meals.

Perpetuating the Experience

As You Return (Your Personal Reflections)

1. Pray for God's guidance in this exercise.
2. Write down some names and events from this mission experience for praise and Thanksgiving. Consider describing one special experience on the back of this sheet.
3. List some persons and issues (the work, power structures, agendas, conflict, loss, anxiety, authority, witnessing, affirmation, resistance, responding to failure, motivation, communication, stewardship, etc.,) for which you will pray.
4. Think about what the Lord might want you to do in the future in light of your experience with regard to:
 - in your local church and community (include telling others about your experience)
 - in your association
 - in Virginia
 - in the USA
 - internationally
5. Send the Mission Development Staff (Craig.Waddell@bgav.org) a couple of pictures or a short video from your project, along with a short description of your experience. We can use this to motivate others for service, as well as let Virginia Baptists know what we are doing together for God's Kingdom.

Useful internet links

www.bgav.org Baptist General Association of Virginia
www.travelwithgallagher.com/ Gallagher Charitable Insurance Solutions
www.traveldocs.com Travel Document Service (visa applications; useful travel information about every country in the world)
www.cdc.gov – Centers for Disease Control
www.mdtravelhealth.com - MDTravelhealth –health tips, vaccination info
www.weatherunderground.com/cgi-bin/findweather/ - World weather
www.oanda.com/convert/classic - Currency converter
www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/ - International time zones
www.countrycallingcodes.com/ - Country calling codes

Books

Clark, Chap, and Powell, Kara E. *Deep Justice in a Broken World*. Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 2007.

Corbett, Steve, and Fikkert, Brian. *When Helping Hurts*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012.

Dearborn, Tim. *Short-term Missions Workbook*. Downers Grove: IV Press, 2003.

Lanier, Sarah A. *Foreign To Familiar*. Hagerstown: McDougal Publishing, 2000.

Livermore, David A. *Cultural Intelligence, Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World*. Ada: Baker Academic, 2009.

Lupton, Robert D. *Toxic Charity*. New York: HarperOne, 2012.

Peterson, Roger, Aeschliman, Gordon, and Sneed, R. Wayne. *Maximum Impact Short Term Mission*. Minneapolis: STEMPress, 2002.

Powell, Kara E., and Griffin, Brad M. *Deep Justice Journeys*. Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 2009.

Culture: A Brief Overview

Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät
Interkulturelles Training
Juni 2008



EUROPA-UNIVERSITÄT
VIADRINA
FRANKFURT (ODER)

- Handout: Intercultural Training -

(Translated from German)

What is intercultural training?

- Intercultural training prepares one for unfamiliar situations which arise in the encounter with different cultures. It should help one to develop a sensitivity for differences between cultures.

- The point is not to have a pat answer for all situations, even if this handout does contain many oversimplifications and illustrations. The most important thing is to develop a consciousness of the differences between cultures.

- Culture - in the sense we are using it - is a system of various behaviors, worldviews, values and experiences.

- One could think of culture as an iceberg, of which only a small part is visible above the water. When one first encounters another culture, certain things are immediately obvious. Other things are less recognizable and have to be discovered and understood with time.

The interplay of cultures:

- The following areas explain in an oversimplified way how some misunderstandings can arise because of these cultural differences:

- “Power Distance“ - how easily one relates to somewhat of a different power level - employee to boss, member to pastor, etc.) There are countries in which the separation from people in power is greater than in other countries. In Scandinavia for example even the nobility is treated like anyone else. The power distance is very small. Otherwise the French, where higher-placed people enjoy a greater deference - there they are treated with great recognition and are privileged.
- Collectivism vs. Individualism - In western societies, the person as an individual is the focus. In most other cultures the person is seen more as a part of a “we-grouping“. Identity comes through the social network one is in, and therefore it’s not necessarily possible for one to express a “personal opinion“. In such encounters, it is important not to tear apart “we-groupings,“ but instead ask for “group opinions“.
- Style of Communication - The way people communicate depends very much on their environment. In collectively oriented cultures people know each other very well. They understand each other while using fewer words, and express themselves implicitly. People from individualistic cultures can easily feel like something is being concealed from them, when they are amidst a collectivistic culture. By the same token, a collectivistic oriented person can easily feel overwhelmed by the flood of information that comes from an individualistic oriented person.



- Concept of time - In many lands with warmer climates, one doesn't orient oneself so much by a clock, and also does more than one thing at the same time. In many western cultures, like in Germany, one takes the time schedule very seriously. One takes care of one thing after another and where possible, according to the minute. The ideas of "punctuality," can be hours or even days apart.
- Avoiding feelings of insecurity - There are countries in which one simply needs rules, else nothing works. One needs thick law books, pages-long contracts and detailed travel itineraries. There are also countries where one comfortably lives with fewer and looser rules.
- Distribution of Roles - In Scandinavia, men cook and clean sometimes; however in many other countries the traditional distribution of roles is still at work. The man works and the woman takes care of the household and the children.
- Values: these are the visions or conceptions a society has of what is desirable; conceptions which guide people. One distinguishes between moral values (righteousness, faithfulness), religious (fear of God, neighborly love), political (tolerance, freedom), aesthetic (art, beauty) and material values (wealth).
- Stereotypes - simplified interpretations of people or behaviors. Patterns of interpreting others (or their behaviors) develop, which attempt to summarize a person's characteristics. These are often connected with value statements.

Cultural standards

- They are binding norms for the carrying out and evaluation of behaviors.
- They determine our perception and action.
- They are internalized through growing up in a society.
- They are subject to gradual and temporal changes along with the rhythm of generations.
- They are recognized through sociological study and are evaluated scientifically and methodically.
- They are always worked out in contrast to another culture.
- They are not a general, self-contained nor comprehensive description of another culture, but rather they are just an excerpt out of all the potential cultural standards that are typical for that country.
- They often are limited in validity to a certain field of activity (e.g. vocation)

Beneficial characteristics for learning intercultural competence:

- The ability to endure unstructured and inconsistent situations
- Empathy: ability to read the concerns and interests of others from their vague references, gestures or other signals
- Frustration tolerance: ability to deal self-critically with one's own mistakes
- Ability to handle conflict constructively, and ability to work toward a solution
- Desire to learn : curiosity and interest for new things
- Personal stability: a sense of one's own cultural imprinting as a prerequisite for dealing with people from other cultures
- Self-distance - the ability to see oneself from the perspective of others
- Humor: the ability to laugh at oneself: It's humor when you laugh in spite of yourself.