

## Nacerima

**SPECIFIC ISSUE/S:** Stereotypes

**PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES:** To enable participants to explore their own assumptions of what is culturally 'normal'

**LENGTH:** 15 - 20 minutes

**GROUP SIZE:** A minimum of 5, otherwise unlimited

**GROUP CHARACTERISTICS:** Can be done with any group where the dominant culture is Western

**FACILITATOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED:** Low level of facilitator knowledge; Low level facilitation skills sufficient

**RESOURCES NEEDED:** Nacerima script to read; Nacerima background article (for facilitator)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask participants if anyone has heard about the Nacirema people  
*If anyone has, ask them to keep their knowledge to themselves for a short time.*

4. Tell the participants that you are going to read them a short article. Ask them to listen carefully and explain that it comes from something written by an anthropologist who was very interested in the Nacirema people and, in particular, their bodily rituals. Read the article, pausing after each ritual to give participants a few moments to reflect on each one.

Highlight a couple of the bodily rituals described in the article (use the same terminology as the article so the ritual is not too easily identifiable).

5. Ask participants to guess:

- Which century?
- Which continent?

And ask:

- How would you describe the Nacirema culture?

6. Explain that Nacirema is 'American' backwards and that the article is describing aspects of American culture in the 1930s. Check if there are any parts they aren't sure about and clarify if required (e.g. woman baking their heads refers to being under hair dryers). Ask if they think that Americans would be likely to identify their own culture in this way.

Point out that when we are in the dominant group we are often unaware that our own culture exists and don't think about how 'others' might experience being with us.

7. Break participants into small groups or pairs. Give them ten minutes to identify any beliefs, attitudes, values or practices that may be considered 'normal' within their occupational or organisational environment that may not be considered 'normal' by those from 'other' cultures who are represented in the group?

*e.g. mechanics (was all male culture) often had calendars depicting topless women on the wall: likely to be offensive to women coming into the profession.*

*Or, a work group meeting starting with a Christian prayer: this might be accepted part of work culture for some but alienating for others.*

8. Ask for feedback from group discussions.
9. Ask participants to suggest how we could find out how 'others' may be interpreting our behaviour, for example, in our work culture?  
[Suggestions could include: from books or films by 'others about us'; engage 'other' consultants to advise, collect feedback through third parties]

**FACILITATION TIPS:**

**VARIATIONS:** This activity can be modified if time is short

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