

# Three Pillars of Cultural Humility

Cultural Humility & Responsive Service Delivery • THW Continuing Education

## REFERENCE

# Three Pillars of Cultural Humility

A printable summary of the three pillars that define cultural humility in practice. Return to this often — ideally after challenging interactions or in supervision.

Pillar	Core Question	Practice
<b>1. Self-Reflection</b>	<i>What might I be missing about myself in this moment?</i>	Notice your reactions. Examine your assumptions. Ask what your own cultural lens is doing here.
<b>2. Openness</b>	<i>What might I be missing about this person?</i>	Approach with curiosity. Hold your expertise lightly. Let the person be the expert on their own experience.
<b>3. Accountability</b>	<i>What is my responsibility for impact, regardless of intent?</i>	When you cause harm, name it and repair. Address inequities in your systems, not just your interactions.

## Daily Practices for Each Pillar

### Self-Reflection

- Notice when you feel quick certainty about someone — that's often where assumption lives
- Journal after challenging interactions: what came up for me?
- Seek feedback from supervision and colleagues
- Read, listen, and learn from voices outside your own experience

### Openness

- Ask, don't assume: "Tell me about that, if you'd like to share"
- When unsure, say so: "I don't know much about that — help me understand"
- Resist the urge to relate everything back to your own experience
- Hold space for the discomfort of not knowing

### Accountability

- When you misstep, repair quickly: "I realize that may have landed wrong — let me try again"
- Notice patterns in who you connect with easily and who you don't
- Speak up when policies or practices in your organization create disparities
- Don't expect people from marginalized groups to educate you — do your own work

## **Cultural humility is a way of being, not a checklist**

You won't do all of this perfectly — no one does. The point isn't perfection. It's the ongoing practice of returning to these three commitments, especially after you fall short.

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