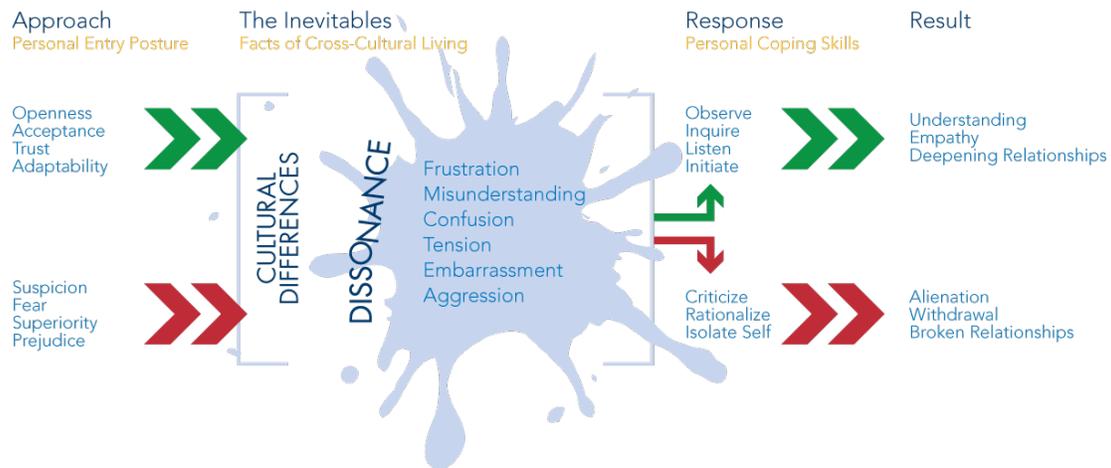


APPROACHING DIFFERENCES DIAGRAM OVERVIEW

A tool for loving well across cultural differences



OVERVIEW

Anytime we encounter new cultures, cultural differences are inevitable and can create **Dissonance**, bringing up emotions like frustration, misunderstanding, confusion, tension, embarrassment, or aggression.

This diagram helps us to navigate through dissonance and move toward the **Results** on the green-line arrows: understanding, empathy and deepening relationships.

While dissonance is inevitable in cross-cultural encounters, we can cultivate good entry postures (**Approach**) and learn healthy responses to dissonance (**Response**).

In your entry postures and responses, try your best to stay on **the green-line arrows** and avoid **the red-line arrows**. Rather than prioritize our own emotions and dissonance, this tool can equip us to love and humbly serve those who are culturally different from us.

This means entering into cross cultural encounters with a posture that is open, accepting, trusting and adapting (green-line) and rejecting a posture of suspicion, fear, superiority and prejudice (red-line).

This also means that when encounter inevitable dissonance, rather than responding by criticizing, rationalizing and isolating ourselves (red-line), we will intentionally choose to respond by observing, inquiring, listening and initiating (green-line).

Of course, this is easier said than done. We'll need to be honest with ourselves and keep one each other accountable. We must resist the temptation of the red-line and intentionally stay on the green-line for the sake of others. In other words, we'll need to have the same love and same mindset as Christ, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but humbly valuing others above ourselves. (Phil. 2:1-5)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

- Philippians 2:3-4

APPROACH: PERSONAL ENTRY POSTURE

Green-Line Entry Postures	
Trust	Assumes the best intentions of others' behavior, gives the benefit of the doubt whenever possible.
Acceptance	Recognizing others for who they are, not demanding they act according to my preferences.
Adaptability	Willing to adjust your preferences or comforts for the sake of others. Being flexible.
Openness	Being appropriately honest and vulnerable for the purpose of deeper trust and relationship.
Red-Line Entry Postures	
Suspicion	Assumes the worst intentions of others' behavior. The opposite of trust.
Fear	Believing that something or someone is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat.
Superiority	Believing my ways and values are better than others. Others aren't different, they're just wrong.
Prejudice	Forming opinions, usually negative, about a situation or person based on perceived group membership.

RESPONSE: PERSONAL COPING SKILLS

Green-Line Responses	
Observe	When faced with dissonance, I pay attention to what's happening instead of leaping to criticism. There may be details or clues that could help me get to a deeper understanding of the situation.
Inquire	Rather than make conclusions, I ask questions. I am curious and engaged. I want to learn more. I seek cultural guides or resources that can help me grow in understanding and empathy.
Listen	I pay close attention to what others are saying (and not saying), their body language and non-verbal cues. I resist the urge to make judgments, interrupt or inject your opinion.
Initiate	Proactively responding to dissonance, rather than becoming passive or disengaged. Resisting the temptation to check out and instead take initiative by observing, inquiring and listening.
Red-Line Responses	
Criticism	Overly focuses on perceived faults/mistakes of others. Coping by focusing on how inferior others are.
Rationalize	Attempting to justify or explain dissonance in a way that puts blame on others or absolves me from responsibility.
Isolation	Coping by withdrawing physically, socially or emotionally. Erecting a wall to protect myself from others.

FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

1. Which green-line personal entry postures come most naturally to you? Which red-line postures do you most struggle with?
2. Can you think of a time that you demonstrated a green-line response to dissonance? What about a red-line response?
3. What one personal entry posture (green-line or red-line) do you want to be particularly mindful of? What about one personal coping skill (green-line or red-line)?

MORE RESOURCES!

For free approaching differences diagram resources and much more visit the MEM Resource Library:
mem.intervarsity.org/resources

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. As a community, which green-line entry postures are you strong in? Which red-line postures do you struggle with? Why do you think that is? Which red-line responses do you have a tendency towards?
2. Which green-line responses do you want to practice as a group? How can you keep each other accountable?
3. Share your answers to Individual Reflection Question #3 and pray for one another in pairs or as a whole group.