

Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone Is Different: Sample Response

This is a sample of two students' joint response. The students are AR and DC. Both are young women. One is Brazilian and the other is Peruvian. At the time they completed this lesson, they were students in Level 5 at the Institute for Intensive English.

Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone Is Different

In a family, what is considered polite and what is considered rude? What manners are taught? (Think about such things as behavior toward guests in the home, what to say when meeting someone, what to say when disagreeing with someone, how to speak to an older person.)

Americans: In a family, Americans consider polite to greet to other relative with a kiss or hug, and it is consider rude when a relative doesn't greet another in a familiar meeting, or when they share a meal. When they receive a guest, they invite them to drink or eat something, and they offer them a seat. They speak to an older people with respect. They listen to older people after they give their opinions.

Me: With my family, I greet my relatives with a kiss in their cheek, and if I receive a guest, I entertain him with some drink or special food. If I disagree with somebody, I explain my point of view, also I listen to the other person. I speak to an older person with respect.

How often do people see their extended family (for example, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins)? What role do they play in a person's life?

Americans: Usually they don't see very much of their extended family. They see their extended family in Christmas or in a family event, like weddings, funerals or birthdays.

Me: I usually see my aunts and my ankles every week. I share with them my happiness and my sadness. They take care of my daughter, so they are a very important model for her.

What do people wear and what do they do on special occasions? Do they act differently?

Americans: They wear suits and dresses, and most of the time they talk to each other. They usually wear special clothes, with special colors in special days, like July 4, Christmas, Halloween, and Thanksgiving Day.

Me: We wear informal clothes. Rarely, we wear special clothes in special days (patriotic days or Christmas time). We wear different color clothes in different seasons. In special occasions, we decorate our home and we prepare special food for our guests.

When do people get very angry? How do they express their anger?

Americans: It's very strange to see an American angry. Sometimes, when they get mad or angry, their faces turn red, but it isn't usual to see them screaming.

Me: We gesture very much. We scream, yell, cry. We express our feelings using all our body.

When are people nice and when are they rude?

Americans: When they are rude, they use different kinds of language, and talk very loud. When they are nice, they speak softly and smile. They pay attention to the other people.

Me: We are rude when we show others an ugly face, or when we look too serious and we keep a strong silence.

Who do people discriminate against? What do they do to those people?

Americans: Usually, they discriminate against "the different" (the person that doesn't have same religion, same language, same costumes, and same skin color). I think, they discriminate against others because they have low self-esteem, and they need to feel strong and secure. If they think, "I'm right," they can dominate other people.

Me: Basically, we are the same as Americans. Maybe, it is not too evident because we receive fewer immigrants. I notice that in our countries we are friendlier with immigrants than Americans.

Note: Since this form was presented to students, you will notice that I have made some small changes in the format.