

Tips in intercultural coexistence

Refugees often travel huge distances to find a better and safer life. In doing so, they leave their cultural space and seek refuge in places that do not correspond to their own culture. Insecurities and prejudices can quickly lead to tensions on both sides. But you as a host of refugees can make a significant contribution to reducing intercultural tensions and promoting intercultural exchange. The following tips should help you to do this:

Tip 1: Fear of the unknown is normal, but does not need to be

A certain uncertainty about new things is quite normal and human. The same applies to unknown cultures. **Prejudices** do the rest and **promote restraint** with regard to the unknown culture. But this does not need to be. In a direct exchange with people from different cultures, you quickly realize that **many prejudices are unfounded**. Although prejudices primarily serve our brains to **make the world more manageable** and to **reduce complexity**, they are often interpreted negatively and instrumentalized for hatred and slander. Therefore, in your position, it is of great importance to **moderate between different cultures** and **reduce negative prejudices**.

Tip 2: Be open to new things

Through direct contact with refugees, you are always in exchange with people from different cultures. As a result, you have probably quickly discovered that **each culture** represents its **own customs and traditions**. What creates discomfort for some people is actually a great opportunity to **broaden your horizons**. Be intentional about **learning about the cultures** of the refugees. This not only **fosters a bond** with the refugees and thus trust in them, but also **enriches your experience**. See the beautiful aspects in the culture, for example in the area of culinary and art. In addition, the coming together of different cultures, also offers to learn more deeply **how to deal democratically with each other**, which is also important in the monocultural coexistence.

Tip 3: Communication is the key

Despite all prejudices and other reservations, **respect should always be the focus**. Even if you don't like everything about the other culture, you should still **respect its values**. **Communication** plays a central role in this. According to the motto „**the tone makes the music**“, it is possible to discuss cultural differences, as long as one does not become insulting or badmouth the other views. An **open mind**, on the other hand, can help you to get to know the other culture and possibly learn to love it in some aspects.

Respectful interaction should be emphasized, especially within one's own four walls. Both the living out of one's **own cultural customs** and respect for other **cultural practices** should be encouraged. Culture should be given sufficient space to maintain **harmony**. Therefore, it is important to **communicate clearly and in a friendly manner** what is important to you and how you **envision respectful coexistence**.

To summarize:

If you are **interculturally competent**, you can interact successfully with people from a different cultural background. In concrete terms, this means **behaving respectfully, showing understanding** for the other culture, and paying attention to both one's **verbal and nonverbal communication**.

Checklist: Key competencies for the acquisition of intercultural competence



- ✓ **Openness, impartiality**
Approach people from other cultures with an open mind and without prejudice.
- ✓ **Flexibility, ability to change perspectives**
Do not insist on your point of view, but put yourself in the situation of your counterpart.
- ✓ **Respect**
Respect other people for who you are.
- ✓ **Tolerance**
Even if you do not understand other people's views, you should at least tolerate them.
- ✓ **Empathy**
A friendly demeanor is good for any social interaction.
- ✓ **Willingness to learn**
Be eager to get to know (and perhaps love) other people and their cultural backgrounds.
- ✓ **Anpassungsfähigkeit**
Be flexible and adapt to the demands of different cultures.

Bonus Tip: Psychological (online) counseling for better intercultural coexistence

In psychological counseling, you can work with a psychologist to **identify and eliminate prejudice**. You can **develop interventions** to resolve conflicts in intercultural interactions and promote **respectful interactions**.

Psychological counseling online at Instahelp

The **Versicherungskammer Group** with its approximately 7000 employees is **deeply affected by the warlike events in Ukraine**.

They show in a painful way that basic democratic rights and sovereign coexistence cannot be taken for granted, that even peace throughout Europe is in danger. Our thoughts are with the victims and the countless people who are suffering as a result of the current conflict in Eastern Europe.

The current time presents us all with a great mental challenge. That is why we are **encouraging helpers who have taken in refugees with an online psychological service** in cooperation with **Instahelp**.

You can find more information about the commitment of the Versicherungskammer Group here: <https://www.vkb.de/content/services/ukraine/>

