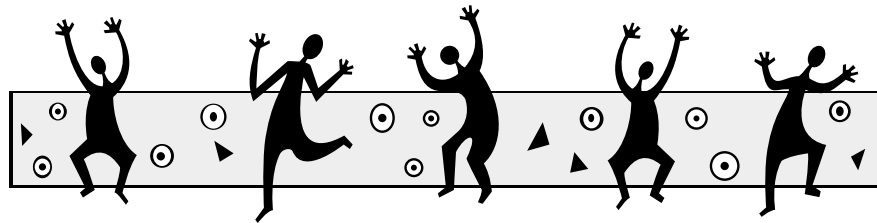




*P*roverbs

to promote understanding across generations and cultures



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ABOUT THE CURRICULUM

AUDIENCE

- Youth, ages 12–19
- Older adults
- Intergenerational audiences

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- increase understanding of the process of aging
- increase communication with family members
- develop intergenerational relationships
- raise awareness of cultural differences and similarities

LIFE SKILLS

- Communicating
- Caring for others
- Thinking and reasoning
- Empathizing
- Accepting differences

LENGTH

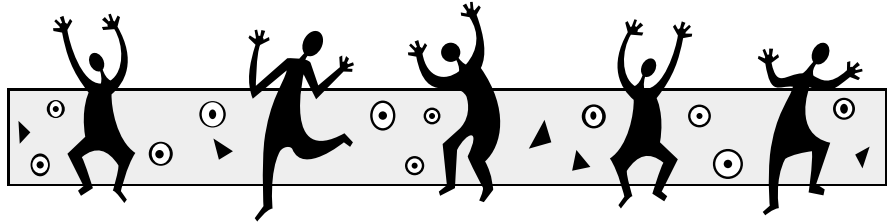
- About one hour (or longer, depending on length of discussion)

FORMAT

This session involves a facilitator who presents selected proverbs and engages the participants in discussion and activities related to the theme of the proverb. Discussion points are provided for the facilitator. You also may want to use some of the proverbs as part of another program you are conducting to promote intergenerational and multicultural understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the standard dictionary definition, a proverb is a “short saying in common use that strikingly expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience.” The condensed nature of proverbs allows them to be interpreted again and again, across time and in different situations. They are interesting because they not only tap into universal themes in the human condition, but also vary in ways that appear to reflect cultural differences.

In the home and in other community settings alike, proverbs are used to pass on rich cultural traditions, to transmit folklore, and to communicate expected codes of behavior. In this curriculum, proverbs are used to help youth and older adults become more aware of social and cultural stereotypes and promote tolerance and understanding.

Despite the power of proverbs, which lies in their widespread appeal and perceived accuracy, it is problematic to assume that proverbs necessarily reflect underlying “truths” about people and societies. The first activity, “Who Wants to be a Millionaire,” explores stereotypes and their influence on people and society.

Other activities in the first part of the curriculum highlight how we understand the process of aging, communicate with family members, and develop intergenerational relationships in our lives. These activities can be used with any group of young people (school or community organization), older adults (senior center, adult day care facility) or intergenerational group (young people and seniors together).

The second part of the curriculum, “The Facts of Life,” is designed to raise awareness of cultural differences and similarities. These activities can be used with either culturally homogeneous or heterogeneous groups.

Where a proverb appears first in its original language, it is followed by an English translation and sometimes an explanation. To highlight the underlying cultural, philosophical, and historical significance of the proverbs, talking points are provided for the major themes presented in this curriculum guide.

SESSION OUTLINE PART ONE

ACTIVITY 1 **Who Wants to be a Millionaire?**

By answering all of the following correctly, you'll win a chance to understand other people and learn to communicate with youth, older adults, or people who aren't like you. You'll be rich with knowledge!

This is a good introductory activity or opener to the Proverbs curriculum.

1. "Stereotypes" are:

- A. always negative.
- B. generalizations made about people because they belong to a particular group.
- C. usually accurate.
- D. not objectionable.

ANSWER: B. Stereotypes are generalizations made about individuals on the basis of their membership in a particular group. They exist for almost any characteristic that is used to distinguish groups of people from one another—gender, race, religion, vocation, physical appearance, and age. Because proverbs are so condensed and pithy, the stereotypes they convey wrongly obscure individual differences.

Stereotypes are not always negative. For example, because he wears glasses, one author of this curriculum guidebook finds that he is sometimes given the benefit of the doubt in terms of knowing what he is talking about. (After all, aren't all people with glasses smart?)

2. A "self-fulfilling prophecy" is:

- A. a stereotype that members of a particular group believe in, causing them to behave in "expected" ways.
- B. good because it helps youth know how to act.
- C. when people guess what is going to happen to them.

ANSWER: A. When stereotypes seep into our own self-perceptions, some people actually tend to behave and delimit themselves in ways consistent with the projected expectations of others. This process, called self-fulfilling prophecy, often occurs without our conscious awareness.

3. Proverbs are:

- A. ways of passing down accurate information from one generation to the next.
- B. short sayings in common use that express some obvious truth or familiar experience.
- C. always written so clearly that they are not open to different interpretations.

ANSWER: B. According to the standard dictionary definition, a proverb is "a short saying in common use that strikingly expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience." The condensed nature of proverbs allows them to be interpreted again and again, across time and in different situations. Despite the power of proverbs, which lies in their widespread appeal and perceived accuracy, it is problematic to assume that proverbs necessarily reflect

underlying “truths” about people and societies. For one thing, some proverbs are objectionable on the grounds that they convey stereotypical and defamatory notions about groups of people of a certain ethnicity, age, or some other characteristic.

4. Positive stereotypes:

- A. are good and should be used frequently in communication.
- B. can contain inaccuracies and contribute to serious misunderstandings.
- C. help us to be understood.

ANSWER: B. Even though they seem positive, stereotypes still attribute characteristics to the entire group that are inaccurate.

ACTIVITY 2

Talking About Aging

PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVITY

In this activity, we will explore how language has affected our conceptions about aging, youth development, and intergenerational engagement. The proverbs discussed can be used to invigorate discussion about how different cultures and ethnic groups view age and aging.

FORM SMALL DISCUSSION GROUPS

Divide the group into small discussion groups of 4–5 people. If the participant group includes both seniors and young people, mix them up. To divide your group, pass around a basket with small candy bars. The number of types of bars should equal the number of groups you want and the total number of bars should equal the number of participants. Ask each participant to pick a candy bar that he or she likes to eat. When everyone has a bar, ask all of the same bars to form a group (e.g., all of the Krackel bars become one group, all of the Hershey bars form a group, and Mr. Goodbars form the third group). This is fun and starts the conversation. It also helps divide your group up much faster than counting off or asking the group to split up on their own.

ACTIVITY

Ask each group to review each theme and the proverbs listed below it. Discuss what the proverbs mean and whether the group agrees or disagrees with them. Are any stereotypes presented? Ask group members to identify one example from their own experience that reinforces or disputes the themes.

EXAMPLE

Old age can be a time of enjoyment.

One group member shares: “Old age can be a time of enjoyment. My grandmother enjoyed gardening until the day she passed away. She was 81. She enjoyed the planting, the weeding, and the harvest. She never once complained about aches and pains while she was in her garden.”

Another group member shares: “My uncle did not want to retire. He couldn’t imagine what he was going to do when he wasn’t able to work. His work was his life. He finally started volunteering for a local service club, but it wasn’t easy going for him.”

Theme 1: Old age can be a time of enjoyment.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|-----------------|---|---|---|
| Italian: | La pensione e la seconda giovinezza. | To retire is like getting a second youth. | |
| Japanese | Dai ni no jinsei. | The second life. | This refers to how senior adults now can have fun for themselves. |
| Korean | Yaeshun sal yi dueltae insaeng yi shijhak duep ni da. | Life begins when you are sixty. | This saying alludes to the special way used in Korea to count years. The same year comes back after every 60 years. |

Theme 2: Along with old age comes a greater level of wisdom and life experience.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| Spanish | Mas sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo. | The devil knows more because he's old than because he's the devil. | This saying serves as a reminder that old people have a lot of knowledge. |
| Chinese (Mandarin) | Wo chi guo de yian bi ni chi guo de fuan hai duo. | I have eaten more salt than you have eaten rice. | This is akin to saying, "I am old enough to have more knowledge and experience than you." |
| Arabic (Lebanese) | | He who has not any old man (in his household) let him buy one. | An old man in a family is a fount of wisdom and right counsel. |
| Chinese (Mandarin) | Lao ma shi tu. | An old horse will never get lost. | This saying suggests that young people must respect elderly people because elderly people have more knowledge and experience. |
| Tongan | Tauhifonua | Literally, "Keeper of the land." | This saying refers to how elders, who have worked hard throughout their lives to sustain a family or a community, are the guardians and custodians of community norms, history, wisdom, and protocols. |
| Portuguese | Panela velha e' que laz comida boa. | The old pan is the one that makes good food. | |

Theme 3: **Old age as a time of challenge—potential for loneliness, vulnerability, and lack of ability.**

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Swedish | Unga lever sina liv i flock, vuxna i par, och gamla ensamma. | Youth goes in a flock, manhood in pairs, and old age alone. |
| Hawaiian | Elemakule kama 'ole moe I ke ala. | An oldster who has never reared children sleeps by the roadside. |
| Chinese (Cantonese) | . . . lie ngow seong su. | (Teaching an old person to learn is like) — asking a cow to climb a tree. |
| Irish | | The old man hasn't the place of the cat in the ashes. |

Theme 4: **We have control over how we age.**

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|---------------|---|----------------------------------|
| German | Wer rastet der rostet. | The person who rests will rust. |
| French | Un homme est aussi vieux que ses artères. | A man is as old as his arteries. |

TALKING POINTS FOR THE FACILITATOR

This information can be covered after small group discussion has ended. Ask participants to share relevant information from their small group discussion as you review each of the points below.

- Many of the proverbs presented above invoke positive as well as negative characterizations of old age and the process of aging.
- There is no one way to think about older adults. People in different cultures have a broad range of ideas about aging, as you can see from the proverbs your group just discussed. In the English language, for example, there are popular sayings in praise of the virtues of senior adults—such as “The older the wiser”—as well as those that degrade the elderly—such as “Out to pasture.” (The latter saying refers to racehorses that no longer race, associating retirement with lack of activity.)
- In a recent study, researchers found that Americans currently are quite positive about aging. Most survey respondents, consisting of 3,000 people age 18 and older, indicated that they perceive people 65 years and older to have active, healthy, sexual, and financially secure lives and lifestyles.
- In the 2000 presidential debates, the issues that drew the most attention focused on what happens when one stops working (often defined as “retirement”), in terms of collecting Social Security benefits and receiving Medicaid. There are different notions about work and aging; old age does not always result in what we view as “retirement.”

ACTIVITY 3

Remember When?

PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVITY

This activity is designed to start discussion about the many misconceptions surrounding youth.

ACTIVITY

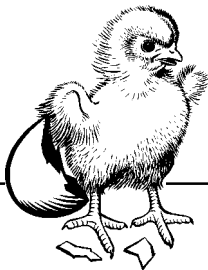
Ask the older people in the group to share what they remember as a teenager about relating to adults. Was it positive or negative?

Ask the youth in the group to share an experience when they were viewed positively and with respect by someone from an older generation. Also, can they think of a situation when an older person viewed them in a negative way?

Share and discuss proverbs (use overhead transparencies) that portray youth in positive as well as negative terms.

Theme 1: Youth as a time of naivete and inexperience.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|------------------|--|---|--|
| Hungarian | It tojashe'j a seggeden van. | The eggshell is still on your butt. | This saying strikingly conveys the point that youth are inexperienced. |
| Korean | Namooae kajika maneulsuruk toe maneun paramyi bunda. | There is blood on your head and it is not dried off yet. | "Blood on the head" refers to when somebody is born. |
| Chinese | Zui shang mei mao, shuo hua bu lao. | He who has no hair on his lip can't be trusted to do anything well. | |
| Spanish | La juventud es un mal que cura el tiempo. | Youth is an illness that time cures. | |
| Hawaiian | He 'opu'u 'oe, he kakala kela. | You are a bud, he is spurred. | This is said as a warning for a youngster not to challenge one stronger than he. |
| Tongan | Lauvale | Uttering of fools. | In Tonga, when you are of a younger generation, you are often referred to as the "lauvale." This means that you are from a generation that has not yet mastered language. You will not be asked to give speeches or to help conduct public ceremonies. |



Theme 2: Childhood and youth as times of hopefulness and celebration.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| Spanish | La juventud vive de la esperanza y la vejez de recuerdos. | Youth lives on hope and old age on memories. | |
| Japanese | Seishun jidai. | The flower of youth. | This phrase suggests that one's early years should be celebrated because they are a fleeting and temporary time. |
| Kannada (India) | Ewattina yuwaka yuwakeeyara shikshanika palana mattu poshana nalina jageittina karyakarta. | The upbringing of today's youth is the determinant of tomorrow's world. | |
| Chinese (Mandarin) | Qin nian yen yu chu sheng de tai yang. | Young people are like the rising sun. | This saying indicates that young people represent energy and hope for the future. |

TALKING POINTS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- Like elders, young people often are the target of proverbs that portray them in negative as well as positive terms.
- In another similarity, both groups are engaged in struggles to receive adequate levels of respect and social standing.

ACTIVITY 4

Coming Together— Patterns of Intergenerational Communication

ACTIVITY

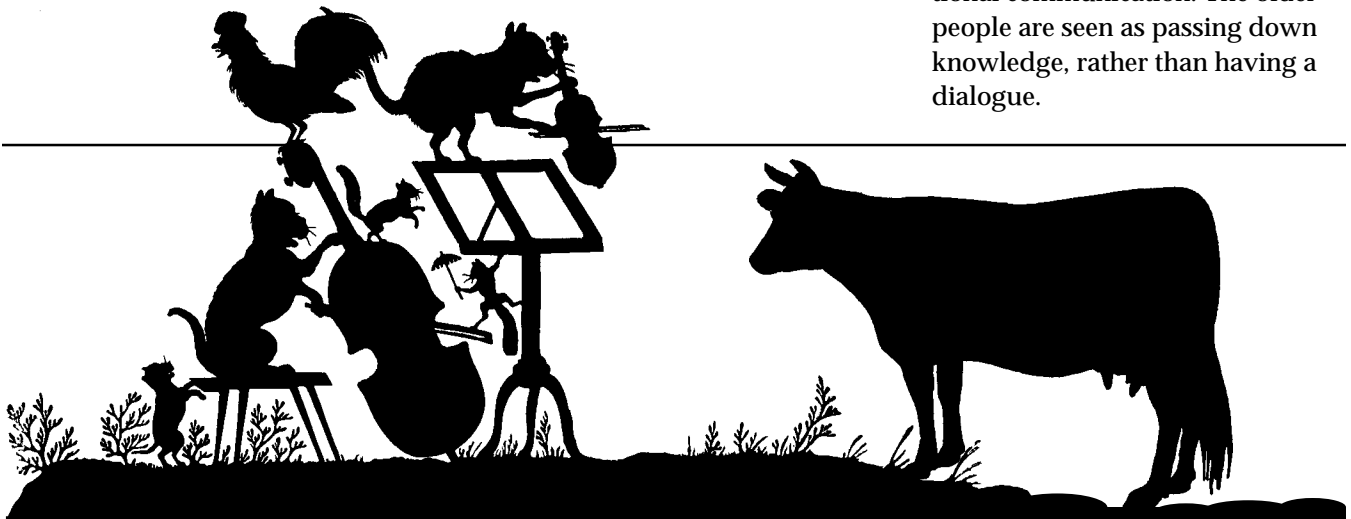
Share several of the proverbs from each of the following four themes:

- Difficulties of intergenerational communication
- Positive aspects of intergenerational communication
- Intergenerational relations within a family
- Youth rebellion

Divide participants into four groups of mixed ages. Assign each group one of the themes. After reviewing the proverbs, each group should develop one or two new proverbs related to the theme. Allow time for sharing the new proverbs.

Theme 1: Difficulties of intergenerational communication.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Chinese (Cantonese) | Dui niao tan qin. | Intergenerational communication is like “playing music to a cow.” | |
| Chinese (Mandarin) | Ji tong ya jiang. | A young person talking to an older adult is like “a chicken talking to a duck.” | It is interesting to note that chickens and ducks are both birds, but of different species. This is another way of noting that when old and young talk to each other, they express different opinions. |
| Indonesia | . . . bogain pihany dibelah dua. | Intergenerational communication is like “an areca nut divided into two.” | This saying is used in cases where it is obvious that there is a big gap in views and communication between the young and the elderly. |
| Swedish | Den ar som en flod. Den flyter nedstroms. | It is like a river. It flows downstream. | This saying emphasizes the hierarchical nature of intergenerational communication. The older people are seen as passing down knowledge, rather than having a dialogue. |

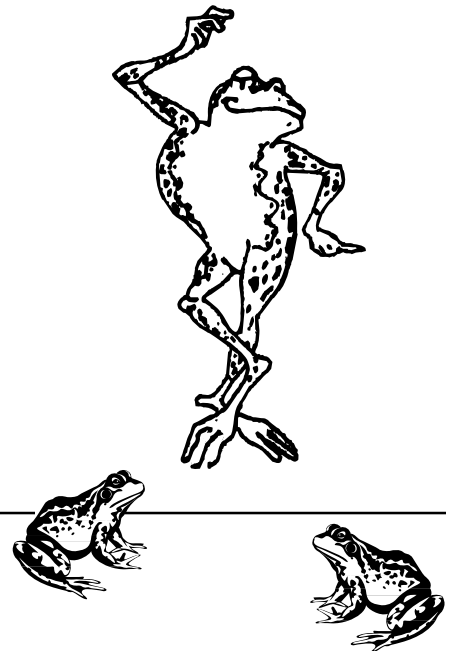


Theme 2: Positive aspects of intergenerational communication (notions of interdependence).

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|----------|---|---|---|
| Chinese | Chang jiang hou lang tui qian lang, yi dai gen bi yi dai qiang. | As in the Yangtse River, the waves behind drive on those ahead, so each young generation should excel the last one. | There is a lot to this saying. Young people are represented by the waves in back, pushing forward with a lot of energy and adding to the momentum of "the river." |
| Chinese | Qian ren zai shu, hou ren cheng liang. | One generation plants the trees under whose shade future generations rest. | |

Theme 3: Intergenerational relations within the family.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Chuuk | Aramas chok money, aramas chok angang, aramas chok mongo. | When one has many relatives, he is like a chief. He can accomplish anything. He has money, work goes well, and food is provided. | Chuuk, with 49,000 people, is the most populous of the Federated States of Micronesia. |
| Korean | Namuae gajiga maneulsuruk, duh maneun baramyi bubnida. | The more branches a tree has, the more winds it attracts. | |
| Ilocano (Phillipines) | Taripatuen daguiti ubbing. Isu dan to ti nangtaripato kenca no lumakay ca. | Take care of the young and they will take care of you in your old age. | |
| Spanish | De tal palo, tal astilla. | From such a stick, such a splinter. Like father, like son. | |
| Japanese | Kaeru no ko wa kaeru. | Children of frogs are frogs. | |
| Korean | Pu chon cha chon. | Father hands down, son hands down. | |



Theme 4: Youth rebellion.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|----------|--|---|---|
| Swedish | Om Stenalderns barn hade lytt sina foraldrar hade vi fortfarande levat i Stenaldern. | If the Stone Age children had obeyed their parents, we would still be living in the Stone Age. | This saying conveys the point that young people often disobey and are rebellious, but that such rebellion often leads to positive change. |
| Swedish | I en familj ar kvinnan regeringen, mannen folket och barnen oppositionen. | In a family, the mother is the government, the father is the people, and the kid is the opposition. | |
| Japanese | Oite wa ko ni shitagae. | When you become old, you should obey your child. | |

TALKING POINTS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- There is a Japanese word, “kizuna,” which originally meant a rope (tether) that binds animals like dogs and horses, and it came to mean the inseparable bond between humans. In present usage, it means a network of people connected by mutual understanding and norms of interdependence. Kizuna gives us a metaphor for thinking about intergenerational exchange and its significance for healthy human (and societal) development.
- Different cultures have different norms for communication; this includes ideas about what is appropriate in terms of intergenerational communication.
- In the U.S., there is a general acceptance of open patterns of communication between young people and older adults; members of both age groups are expected to share their views about things. Also, the communication dynamic is informal and unceremonious. In contrast, in some other cultural frameworks such as that of the Japanese, much emphasis is placed on how the verbal and nonverbal interaction should reflect the respective status level of the communicators. Insofar as age is a major determinant of status, youth are expected to do more listening than speaking when communicating with their elders.
- Intergenerational communication can be harmonious as well as challenging. We are all familiar with phrases such as “generation gap,” which suggest that there are great difficulties in store for those who attempt to communicate with people of different generations. However, there also is a positive side to intergenerational communication. This is conveyed in the use of metaphors such as the “Yangtze River” to describe intergenerational relations; the first waves make an impact and the later waves build on the successes of the first waves and push forward even more. Here, the notion is one of intergenerational interdependence and harmony, rather than conflict.

ACTIVITY 5

The Facts of Life— Different and the Same Across Countries and Cultures

PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVITY

When we think about different cultures around the world and within our own country, we generally tend to focus on the ways cultures differ from one another. For example, a typical greeting in this country is a handshake, while in many Asian cultures, the typical greeting is a bow.

Indeed, there are many differences between cultures. However, we may be surprised at the many ways in which different cultures share similar meanings and values. In this activity, we will explore the meanings and importance given by different cultures to various aspects of everyday life.

FORM SMALL DISCUSSION GROUPS

Divide the group into small discussion groups of 4–5 people. If participants are from different cultures and different backgrounds, mix them up. You may choose to use the candy bar method of forming groups.

ACTIVITY

Ask each group to review the themes and the proverbs listed below each theme. Discuss responses to the following questions:

1. What is the meaning behind this set of proverbs? What is the message being sent?
2. Do you agree with the message? Why or why not?
3. How are the proverbs from the different countries similar to each other and how are they different?
4. Share an example from your own life that relates to the meaning behind this set of proverbs.

Theme 1: It is best not to act too hastily.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|-------------------|--|
| Chinese | Think three times before you act. |
| Sesotho (African) | The 'hurry-hurry' person eats goat; the one who takes his or her time eats beef. |
| Russian | Take thy thoughts to bed with thee, for the morning is wiser. |
| Danish | The best advice is found on the pillow. |
| English | Patience is a virtue. |
| Portuguese | Hurry is the number one enemy of perfection. |
| English | Good and quickly seldom meet. |
| English | Haste makes waste. |

Theme 2: The use of time is associated with one's work ethic.

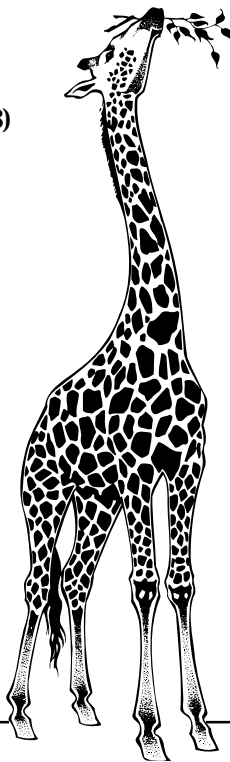
| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|---|--|
| English | The early bird gets the worm. |
| Zaire | A person who arrives early to the spring never gets dirty drinking water. |
| Assiniboine Indian (Native American) | Be an early riser; the game do not snuggle their heads on feather pillows. |
| English | Early sow, early mow. |
| English | Strike while the iron is hot. |
| German | A little too late is much too late. |
| English | He who hesitates is lost. |

Theme 3: Take responsibility to help yourself.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|----------|--|
| Indian | Call on God, but row away from the rocks. |
| Arabic | Trust in Allah, but tie your camel. |
| German | God gives nuts, but he doesn't crack them. |
| Japanese | Pray to God, but hammer away. |
| English | God helps those who help themselves. |

Theme 4: Silence is associated with wisdom and knowledge.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|---------------------------|---|
| Thai | A wise man talks a little, an ignorant one talks much. |
| Spanish | Who knows most speaks the least. |
| Tanzanian | The wisest animal is the giraffe; it never speaks. |
| Bible (Proverbs 17:28) | Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding. |
| French | The less one thinks, the more one speaks. |
| English | A closed mouth catches no flies. |
| Chinese | Two good talkers are not worth one good listener. |
| Indonesian | Rippling water shows lack of depth. |
| Jamaican | If speech wut a schillin', silence wut a pound. |
| Italian | Many have suffered from talking; none ever suffered for keeping silent. |
| Peru | From the tree of silence hangs the fruit of tranquility. |
| Hopi Indian | Eating little and speaking little can hurt no man. |



Theme 5: **Excessive or unguarded talking can cause harm.**

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|-------------------|---|
| Japanese | The tongue is more to be feared than the sword. |
| Chinese | The tongue is like a sharp knife. . . it kills without drawing blood. |
| Nilotic (African) | Words can kill before arms. |
| Arabic | Turn each word seven times in your tongue before you speak. |
| American | A word and a stone let go cannot be recalled. |
| Turkish | Empty vessels make the most noise. |

Theme 6: **We are influenced by those with whom we associate.**

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|------------------|--|
| Argentina | Associate with good men and you will be one of them. |
| Blackfoot Indian | Those that lay down with dogs get up with fleas. |
| Spanish | Live with wolves and you learn to howl. |

Theme 7: **Each person is an individual.**

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|----------|--|
| Japanese | Ten people, ten colors. |
| Yiddish | Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough, but not baked in the same oven. |
| English | Different strokes for different folks. |

Theme 8: Greed does not pay.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|------------------|--|
| Russian | A sparrow in the hand is better than a cock on the roof. |
| English | A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. |
| Latin | If you run after two hares, you will catch neither. |
| Blackfoot Indian | A sparrow in the bush is better than a vulture flying. |



Theme 9: Education is important.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB/ENGLISH TRANSLATION |
|----------|--|
| Chinese | Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime. |
| Chinese | If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people. |
| German | A teacher is better than two books. |

Theme 10: Different conceptions of family.

| LANGUAGE | PROVERB | ENGLISH TRANSLATION | COMMENTS |
|----------|-----------------|--|---|
| Hawaiian | Nana I ke kumu. | Look to the source. | This saying suggests that Hawaiian people should seek knowledge from the ancestors. |
| Zulu | Ubuntu. | We are who we are today because of you who came before us. | This sub-Saharan intergenerational concept was one of the driving themes of the Third Global Conference of the International Federation of Aging held in Durban, South Africa in October of 1997. |

TALKING POINTS FOR THE FACILITATOR:

- An important concept to gain is that although we have many differences when we compare ourselves to people from different cultures, we also have many similarities. We may have different ways of talking and different behavior patterns, but many of our most basic needs and beliefs are similar.
- Some of the proverbs presented above speak to the importance of using time efficiently. Mainstream American culture and Western European cultures tend to value efficient use of time. Time should not be wasted or lost. Time is used to accomplish tasks, and one should avoid procrastination. Use of daily planners, the importance of starting and ending meetings on time, and charging by the hour are examples of the importance placed on the efficient use of time. Some other cultures take a more casual approach to time. “Things will get done when they get done.” The amount of time necessary to accomplish the task or to interact with others, not the clock, determines how much time will be given.
- On the other hand, patience is valued. One should “sleep” on important decisions. Hurrying or rushing through a task does not always pay. One must accept that some things take time to do well. While Americans admire the ability to make decisions quickly, some cultures may perceive quick decision-makers as impulsive. Some Asian cultures, for example, believe that time itself can solve problems better than human intervention.
- Methods of communication vary across cultures with different levels of emphasis placed on verbal and nonverbal communication. The proverbs associated with the theme “silence is associated with wisdom and knowledge” tend to show the importance of silence across several cultures, while those related to “excessive or unguarded talking can cause harm” emphasize the strength of the spoken word. Asian cultures, in particular, tend to place a greater importance on the use of silence. In conversations, the use of silence provides an opportunity to give attention to the speaker and to think clearly about what is being said. Sometimes, the most important part of the conversation is what is *not* said. Americans, on the other hand, tend to be uncomfortable with periods of silence during conversations. There is a tendency to ask questions in an attempt to encourage others to talk and fill up the silence.
- Some proverbs speak to the importance of the company one keeps. We tend to pick up the habits and traits of those we “hang out” with. This can be good or bad, depending on who one “hangs out” with.
- While it may be helpful to call upon divine intervention for assistance, it is important that you do what you can to help yourself at the same time. These proverbs speak to the importance of taking responsibility to accomplish the things we desire.

- Greed does not always pay. It may be better to be satisfied with what we have for sure, than to lose what we have while gambling on the hope of getting even more.
- While we all have similarities, each person is an individual with his or her own unique personality.
- Education is powerful.
- In some societies, “family” includes those who are no longer with us (i.e., ancestors).

Follow-Up Activity Suggestions

1. Select one set of proverbs from above. Create a short story that demonstrates the importance of this set of proverbs.
2. Consider the things in life that are important to you. Create a proverb you would like to share with others. Draw a picture to represent your proverb.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of Congress May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Legislature. T. R. Alter, Director of Cooperative Extension, The Pennsylvania State University.

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Produced by Information and Communication Technologies in the College of Agricultural Sciences

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OK300A rev12/01pdf4443