

CONCEPT  
EXPLAINER

WHAT IS

# Cultural humility

swipe



# Cultural humility

describes a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique, through which individuals recognise the limits of their own knowledge and remain open to learning from others. Respect, curiosity and accountability in cross-cultural interactions are central to this concept.



# Rather than implying

that cultures can be fully “known” or “understood”, cultural humility emphasises continual learning and critical awareness of how power, identity and structural inequalities shape experiences.

It requires not only understanding others, but questioning one’s own assumptions and biases.



# Empathy and

compassion sit at the heart of this process, enabling individuals to engage with others in ways that are attentive, respectful and responsive to lived experience. They foster trust, reduce hierarchical distance, and support relationships in which individuals feel heard and valued, creating the conditions for meaningful learning to take place.



## In public health,

diversity is not abstract but a defining feature of society, shaped by inequality, discrimination and resilience. Practicing cultural humility can therefore be considered a legal and strategic imperative, embedded in duties to advance equality and reflected in national policy commitments to fairness, prevention and reducing inequalities.



# This requires public

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health practice to move beyond technical expertise towards a sustained commitment to understanding lives different from our own. Cultural humility, alongside empathy and compassion, supports more authentic engagement by amplifying the voices of marginalised and oppressed groups, strengthening how evidence is interpreted, building trusted collaboration, and enabling more equitable improvements in population health.



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**Thanks for  
reading**

react and share

