

# Taking First Steps to Cultivate Cross-cultural Friendship

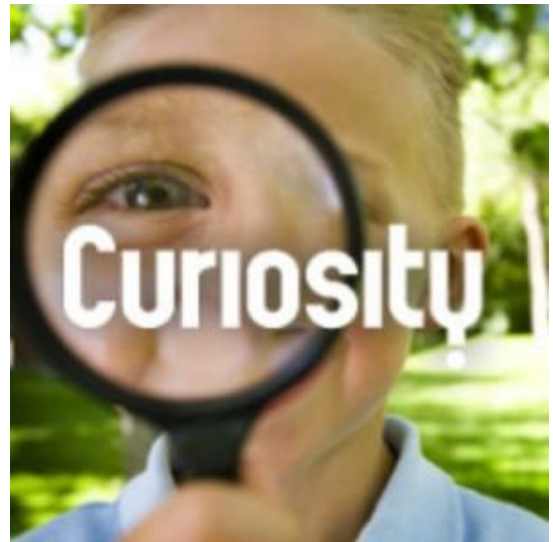
Being part of the multi-cultural community of PolyU, how have you been interacting with students from other cultural backgrounds? Do any of the following experiences seem familiar?



- You associate certain ethnic groups with some negative stereotypes that made you feel unenthusiastic about getting to know them.
- You noticed that some students from an ethnic minority were left out in a social situation. You wanted to engage them but were hesitant to initiate a conversation. You ended up doing nothing.
- You didn't quite understand what a student was saying in a different language, but pretended to know anyway to avoid trouble or possible embarrassment.

If you like to make a difference and build friendship with students across the globe, remember the **three Cs**:

Find out what are some of the common practices/behaviors of another culture that you don't like, can't understand, or find strange etc. Refrain from quick judgments. Stay curious. Look for logical reasons behind everything. Talk to people who have a positive attitude towards the foreign culture to acquire multiple perspectives to understand those behaviors. What does this behavior say about people's underlying values or different social upbringing? Is there anything interesting for you to explore? And can you live and let live?



When you feel uncertain about engaging or socializing with students from other cultures, remember this question: what could you lose? Next time, try to be a translator for a foreign student who needs assistance; or ask a local student whether he wouldn't mind introducing his friends to you. Don't be afraid of rejections. Reaching out to others is the first step to new friendships!



Being genuine is the foundation of friendship. If you don't know, ask. Ask people to rephrase if you don't understand a particular vocabulary or sentence. Be honest so that others can feel that you are truly interested in their stories. Don't over-worry about your language proficiency, instead, have fun making mistakes. That way you can both have a good laugh!

