

Communication across cultures with emotional intelligence,
Townsville Intercultural Centre

NEW SPEAKER: Good afternoon everyone. I hope you're all ready for the next section. This session is from the Townsville intercultural centre. It's about communication across cultures with emotional intelligence. So born in Iran, Dr Daliri arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1984. He completed a bachelor of education at La Trobe University and a Masters of education at Monash University. In 2005, he completed his doctoral thesis in education at James Cook university. Dr Daliri is executive director of the Townsville intercultural centre limited, he is also the founder and organiser of the Townsville cultural festival, an annual festival for the best 23 years as his commitment to unifying Australian diversity, welcome Dr Daliri.

APPLAUSE

DR FARVARDIN DALIRI: Thank you everyone. Wow. It's a privilege to be here... Hello? It's a privilege to be here, in fact working in the field of community service, I'm more classed as a consumer in relation to this gathering because of my experience with the whole range of consumers that we serve, as migrants or newly arrived refugees who are assisted to get engaged with the system of health and mental health particularly, so I've got very short period of time to go through a whole body of information and material which makes it a bit rushed so I'm not going to do that. I'm basically trying to only set the ideas and take questions as well and I within a you to be able to get back to me. My colleague who is the real consumer because I create health workplace health and she has got to consume it, she is there and she has got her contact details, anybody wants to follow us in relation to what we can offer to our agencies please do so. How does these things keep changing? There's nothing changed there? Let's get rid

of that one. A quick story of my daughter in the hospital first. Because I believe that health is about spiritual connection. And this goes back to 5,000 years mythologies and knowledge of health from the old to the Egyptians, if there is a spiritual connection there is a healer. Health is also about communication. If there is a communication, there is a hope for healing. My daughter was accidentally discovered that there is a huge fat lump within her muscle, calf muscle and bone which was very suspicious and very stressful and the exams and tests did not show that it was absolutely benign, and she had to - they originally operated in Brisbane and then she's very meticulous, very articulate, very well educated lady with a dinky di Aussie and then also very health conscious. Cut this story short - they went through weeks of testing and testing and eventually they engaged a very best surgeon to do all the analysis and book the surgeon to do the surgery at the hospital in Brisbane and we all ended up there waiting downstairs at the big hospital in Brisbane and then she was prepared from early morning and we were waiting downstairs, that this is going to be very smooth and no problem, a huge, about 15 centimetre-long tumour had to come out, it wasn't very - good news but it wasn't also bad news, somewhere in the middle. After three hours of waiting downstairs, I got a call from my daughter crying to come upstairs, what happened? She's crying, in tears, what's the story? And then we weren't allowed to talk or get close and we met connect with the patient, more like a prisoner. The story was that the initial surgeon wasn't there for some reason, was on leave and someone else had to do the surgery and that she was kept there for hours prepared everything on the surgery table just before she was being administered the last injection to put to sleep, she was asked by her surgeon where do you want me to cut? This big leg, where do you want me to cut? And she starts collapsing, a crisis, she lost it. Then they went back and forward to the records and they missed a whole range of information that they didn't have and the surgeon was under the impression there is a tumour, it's going to be visible, it wasn't, was asking her how do you want it to be cut. The whole drama ended up to another schedule time a few weeks later and the real surgeon comes, in, a lot of trauma. Communication wasn't taking place there and she wasn't communicated

at the beginning. Even for weeks we didn't know what would happen next till eventually the operation was successful. What we are dealing here is that she was although from a different culture, apparently the doctor was from a different culture, but the system didn't have the commitment to communication and the language was not a barrier, maybe the culture a bit, most of the communication is not done just through technology, I was just talking to Sarah about the role of technology in communication and how sometimes it does let us down in the health sector. We're not machines.

Thanks for that tip from Sarah because she does remind us that we're not machine, we are human, we're essentially spiritual being and we're connected. This is now in keeping with the most recent involving science of human consciousness and connection with health, the objective of health science is still has a bit of catching up to that level but it's there. What I'm talking about here is about how to bypass cultures, how to bypass visual, emotional signals and how to make a real and meaningful connection with the person beyond language culture and everything else. This is how the healers used to work initially. I'm not here to say that you need to know about cultures. To the contrary, in the courses that we deliver, we teach how to unlearn about the initial assumption of culture or initial assumption that this person should know. Or how much they know. These are, assumptions, are the barriers themselves that they need to be put aside for a pure, clear non-verbal and verbal communication. I also put in the slide through showing that, yes, you can make a difference. And every one of us are able to make a difference and this difference comes from us at the core of us who we are as humans, not just as professionals. Professionalism has a duty, has a skill, has ability to do something, then beyond that is who we are as humans, who uses that profession and to be that human is far more profound and powerful, that humanity is equipped with profession and with the science, the tools, that is the real powerful. And they need to be together, they can't be separated. The doctor can't assume that I got it all, I know it all. Shut up and follow. That's where it goes wrong because we have to bring the patient along. When the police and the nurse turn up at the house of a newly arrived refugee from one of the traumatised African nations, to administer a mental health injection, they don't realise what actually they do to that person even without

putting that medication in, they have made a condition far worse because she then after that when she sees the police and the nurse at the door her condition worsens and when what happens that adds to the cycle of medication for her? Just because the show up of the police and the nurse at the gate as provoked her to get worse. They're not mental health symptom, they're normal human reaction to a situation which is unpredictable, dangerous, a policeman at the gate at night with some nurse. The signal for her is a signal to fight for life and the person who is being diagnosed as a mental patient will react to this situation out of proportion and that reaction is not part of mental disease. And for that reason if someone adds up the medication then that's where it goes wrong because initial communication was wrong. The story of that person was unknown to the people who were administering the medicine. The sincerities of that person who has been the victim of domestic violence and the victim of a rape has lived in a refugee camp, run away from her country, her dear ones have been cut in pieces with machetes in front of her eyes, that person can't take any good signal from someone in a uniform at her gate at night and that becomes a reason for her to get even more medication so this is where communication is very important, again, it's not about culture. I'm not at all asking, all I'm asking people to unlearn the culture because culture has not to do with our ego and our mind and I don't think cultures are different in terms of the - what it does to our mind, give us us a way of interpreting our world. At the end of the day it is an interpretation, no matter what culture you have, everyone in the room has a culture which is a interpretation. Tools to interpret information and exactly the same at the neurological level. We need to be able to recognise that I exist without this and you too and at that level we can do far better. One of the things I take people, most of you may be aware of, that we have ability to say no to our emotions or to our triggers of fight, flight but that's slow, by the time I saw or decide that I don't need to jump I see something basically moving around my leg like a snake, I jump because the system with all those points give us the ability to react to a dangerous situation, to needs for survival are three times faster than our business centre or prefrontal cortex which makes us think and that thinking is part of our - most scientists don't think that our existing in our mind but I go back to before the science, yes we did

exist. I'll exist without my social conditioning, I exist without my culture, I exist without my religion, I exist without my education. And that I who makes the decisions is always a slower than the fast limbic system and this speed by which we react the situation needs to be taken into account when we react to people, when we are with people but we respond to our internal assessment of that person based on assumptions prior, learning sometime, apprehension of what this person may or nat do. These things need to be all aside. The reason that it matters at the emotional level is because it's fast. The emotional fight for life and fear and desire and many other emotions are very fast. It takes practise to slow it down and speed up the prefrontal cortex of saying I'm not going to run or get angry or be frightened but fear the fast. Neurons, we hold information in the circuits and those informations react to us through hippocampus before we know it we have an assessment of the situation, assessment of a culture, of a person, that dominates our judgment. Before going to the details this is the process through five senses we receive information, the information is assessed through our vast network of information, from our bad dreams to the TV news, the information is there, one thing about our brain is that our brain does not discriminate within facts or fictions. Our brains have information, from the time that we are in the mother's womb from our DNA from when my grandmother kissed by granddad, apparently she kissed a very short person, could have been a bit taller! Whiter better. Being foolish and exist- ing there and unfortunately everything that comes through TV or media or even neigh- bourhood gossip, they are part of information that the vast network of the information grows and olds so it judges the situation in a rush, we are only judging based on the probabilities that mind project to us based on all that information that could be fact or fiction. And that's fast. I decide to eat or not to eat. Jump or not jump. Love or hate. What I teach in my courses is that there is a process in undermining the autoreflex that we have towards information and culture and icons, replace it with awareness, mean- ing that we basically get over the emotional side of it. Many people argue it's not possi- ble, yes it is not, because emotional lines are very fast, anger is fast, fear is fast, but there is a process in which we can retrain our brain to the possibilities that neuro plas- ticity offers to real organise our wiring from the top to the limbic system to intersect

our reaction so that our emotion is minimised and wisdom is maximised. At that connection is potent and powerful. When a person is sitting next to me, as a client, when the person sees me quiet and still in my mind the chatterbox is off and I'm only observing and reading that person starts with me. If I sit back and relax and smile that person wants to sit back. If I cross my leg, they cross their leg. You become in charge of the communication at that non-verbal level when you're able to settle down the mental activities, has nothing to do with what we say, how to greet, has everything to do with what goes on in the brain at that point in time. In the quietness of the brain and presence of you as who we are, very sacred, very potent space is created when a person trusts you, wants to be with you, is feeling peaceful and protected and safe. This is what is about non-verbal communication. My sister will agree with me that many Aboriginal people operate at that level of non-verbal first. Not verbal. And the best example of that was my brother Logan who used to come to me and see me every day and have a coffee, whenever he good. He was a legend of Aboriginal myths in Townsville, the country music singer, as well as an elder from the Hughenden but very relevant in here, used to come and have have a coffee with me and always gave me wide words and one day he came through the front door and I was so busy in my head that I didn't know how to spend time with him. As soon as I was thinking how will I get myself off from the phone and the note books, he disappears. Then I go to the front desk and ask one of the ladies at the t front desk, there was a gentleman here with an Akubra hat, what happened to him, she said that he just walked away, he didn't come in. I just went out of the office, looked through the mall where we used to have our office and he was right in the middle. I ran behind him, followed him, asking him what happened. He turned back to me and said, "Brother you don't have time for me today." He just walked away. He never talked to me from the reception which was about 20m away from me, he read my mind, was too busy. My mind didn't have the room for him. Although my heart had. He came back a few weeks later, didn't talk about it and he found me quiet in my mind and sat down with me. What we're saying here is nothing new to most of us, but very constant with the cultures and what we do with our mind is im-

portant. There are certain neuro transmitters that you all know about but most important one of them is Serotonin and dopamine we can give it to ourselves. I need social validation, I need social safety, I need to feel that people think I'm OK. And that dopamine kicks up and makes me open-minded. Opposite to that is adrenaline which makes me shut down my brain just like that, when I give someone two words of commendation or encouragement which is true to my heart, when I'm ready to appreciate someone is a smiler or someone's dress code or their hair style or someone's niceness, that kicks up automatically that dopamine, which makes that person's mind 360 degree open. And if I produce compassion in myself, scientifically it is known that compassion creates oxytocin in my blood which is contagious, meaning that if I have compassion in my heart you will get that. The person next to me can't avoid feeling compassion; animals do that. Your dog knows that. When you have something in your heart as compassion for your dog the dog knows it. If you're angry your dog knows it. If you're afraid the dog is aware of it more. How do those animals communicate with us just through those neuro transmitters? We humans should be smarter than animals shouldn't we? If these neuro transmitters are so powerful which changes our behaviour, changes or mind around our face, why do we not take into account our communication and the cultures come in, cultures makes another layer of compensation and there is no way that we can ask anyone in this room to learn more than one culture. That's my claim. There is no way that any one of you can claim that I can learn another culture, and what you live because that's subjective experience of living. That's purely yours. You can learn mine, you can walk with me, empathise with me, there's no way someone can say I'm going to teach your cross cultural training, that's not on. Typical description of a group of people gives the ability to judge someone before you have met the person, before you have connected to that person based on what you understand about those people, you wanted to communicate with that person? That's not possible. So what I offer is to unlearn that. There are 42 muscles in our face that shows expressions. These are universal across everyone. With those 42 muscles, you have spoken before you have opened your mouth or said a word. If you hate someone don't try to tell them. They know it. Particularly don't touch them. Don't touch them on the

shoulder. They'll pick it up and if you love someone you can't hide it. This is basic rules. And we need to bring these ones back to our communication and try to instead of judging what the other person might do or may like to hear, what they hear is what matters. What will I hear for this person? Do I want really to heal, do I care? How - do I care about this person? Have you ever tried to say to someone "how are you?" When you really care about how they are? I'm not saying you don't do that, but you may remember that the responses to your "how are you?" Is different, sometimes some people click to you like a magnet, "I'm not too bad," I want to tell you the whole story because apparently you meant it. And sometimes you just said "you're not too bad darling" and move on. What I'm trying to say, how many more minutes have I got here? Five. Any questions because I don't want to run over. I could talk here for six hours nonstop. Any questions?

NEW SPEAKER: How often do you teach clinicians?

DR FARVARDIN DALIRI: We don't have a chance with them. But we have courses that we run at our office, we also advertise some courses in Brisbane, but when people call us, I go to the agencies, there are a number of agencies that have engaged me and I go there and we do all the staff training for one day and two days and there are two trainings we provide, one is how to communicate. How to overcome our bypass culture, and make a a meaningful connection. And the other one is how to put aside stress and anxiety which is caused as a result of your work or stress and how do you take that away? Or drop it before you go home? That's another course that we do as well. That is connected to this but that was more about self-awareness and how to deal with emotions. This is my brother Logan I talked about. He passed away but his spirit is always there. He was my first or second Aboriginal teacher. In my book he goes to the billabong, I have spoken about my first meeting with them. Perspective, is very powerful. Everyone has a perspective and these perspectives can't be pushed aside because when we talk we talk behind the filters of perspectives. We use language but language doesn't convey what you mean because the receiver of the signal interpreting the signal based on their own individual experience of that particular signal. I say refugee,

how many people here no what a refugee means? Hands up please, how many are refugees? The meaning of this word for each one of you is different and surely for the person who is a refugee or was, is different. OK. And then language is like that. We don't know what the other person gets out of it. We need to know the perspective and we have to allow for that, we have to allow for the person to be different and interpret different and then we will be able to make the communication. Here is my drawing. The ape is looking at the guy and thinking what has happened to you, you gone crazy, a mad house, he has got only brick and large holes, no trees, no animals and this guy is thinking "how long will it take for this ape to become like us progressed and developed?" Both are wondering. That's perspective. This is another perspective, the same culture, same religion, where is the pointer for this?

NEW SPEAKER: That one doesn't have one.

DR FARVARDIN DALIRI: Men and woman from same culture, meet collaboratively with a bit of fun a baby and they happen to be son. It's legitimate, don't worry! Then they have two different perspective. And this is now a dirty masculine and typical perspectives, the emotion which comes with one idea is quite different in terms of the experience of the subject which is the person so I'm fast tracking this because I don't want to be behind. This is now two different perspectives, you're not saying who is right or who is wrong, definitely they have two different perspectives. I can't claim that I know what it means to be pregnant or to bring a child to this world because if I think of something moving in my belly, I'll spew, I remember the move, end of the story, different perspective, different experience, we need to allow for that so we may be able to understand that there is another way of looking at same thing, particularly in health. Listening is very important. I just replace that quickly with another subject which is an Aboriginal person and a white person, me, give me glory of being white for a while. It's not about colour. It's about schooling. For Aboriginal man to a white person like me, the two different concepts for me if somebody tells my why the land and treat it as your mother, I say get out of here, you're crazy, I'm not going to pay mortgage but someone else's perspective includes that. And that is how cultures value things differently. And put different values on different ideas and concepts that we have. Learning

about the superficialities of the cultures. I need to know what does it mean to you, how do you want me to call your name? How can I greet you? If I wanted to hug you can I hug you? Your patients, your customer, your consumer becomes your teacher in leading you a relationship which is about communication. And that way you bridge the perspective gap, I can tell you stories and tragic stories about this idea that some people consider land as their mother creator, some people consider it as a possession, what sort of bloodshed you can think about is beyond description. This some introduction to a course about what we can do in six hours. Happy birthday.

APPLAUSE

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you very much Dr Daliri. It's a great conversation. Sometimes we get so engrossed we forget to stop. Thank you very much.