

What is BaFa'BaFa'?

BaFa'BaFa' is a highly successful and widely used cross-cultural simulation exercise. It is designed to teach sensitivity to difference by providing participants with the opportunity to examine the effect that values, norms, and behaviours have on cross-cultural interactions. This simulation challenges the participants to examine their own cultural perceptions and biases through their active involvement as members of two imaginary cultures. BaFa'BaFa' helps build awareness of how cultural differences impact the way we interact with others.

History Behind The Game

Developed in the 1970's by R. Garry Shirts of Simulation Training Systems, BaFa'BaFa' has been used throughout the world for diversity training and cultural understanding. Originally designed for the US Navy as a training tool for overseas assignments, it quickly spread beyond the Navy and has been used worldwide by schools, universities, multinational organizations, government agencies, hospitals, etc. BaFa'BaFa' is regarded as the most powerful cross-cultural simulation exercise on the market and has a long history of success. For more information, visit www.stsintl.com/schools-charities/bafa.html

How Does It Work?

BaFa'BaFa' is based on the assumption that cultural differences develop because different groups have invented different ways of solving the same problem. Based on this premise, BaFa'BaFa' allows participants to understand that cultural difference should not merely be tolerated, rather difference should be looked at as "a rich reservoir of solutions to real world concerns". The simulation begins with the creation of two cultures, Alpha and Beta. The Alpha culture is relationship oriented while the Beta culture operates on highly competitive trading economy. After the participants spend some time understanding the rules of their cultures, they begin to visit the other culture. The result is feelings of isolation, alienation, and confusion as they try to adapt to this new culture and its ways of interacting. Following this, much time is spent debriefing and discussing the experience. Participants will explore how stereotypes are created and how misunderstandings are magnified. Participants become acutely aware of how powerful culture is in the shaping of individual experience. Through careful debriefing, they will understand how they themselves are implicated in the stereotypical and discriminative evaluation of other cultures; the participants will be encouraged to rethink their own attitudes and behaviours towards others.

As our communities become increasingly diverse and multicultural, it is important that we actively teach our children, teachers, police, health care workers, government employees, and every member of our communities how to build relationships premised on sensitivity and inclusivity. This experiential simulation will teach the participant how to initiate and maintain positive interaction with others. They will learn how crucial it is to promote a welcoming and prejudice-free environment in every aspect of their lives.

