Scarlet Letter Exercise:
Have you experienced a social prejudice?
LEARNING ACTIVITY

Description
Societal norms can create offenses often resulting in prejudices, discrimination and non-acceptance of individuality. Our world’s diversity needs embracing at a personal level. Awareness and acceptance of race, ethnicity and cultural differences opens our eyes to a broader more engaging and connected world. Being wise to the value of inclusiveness will encourage a health professional who practices cultural humility when meeting the needs of the patients and populations they serve.

Competencies
C1. Health Equity and Cultural Competency
- C1.2 Diversity Culture and Linguistic Knowledge
  - Contrast cultural humility and cultural competence
  - Relate own cultural background and biases (e.g. sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia)
  - Explain how sex, gender, identity, age, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, language, disability, socioeconomic status, and other factors may affect communication and oral health service delivery.

Learning Outcomes
- Experience reactions from others recognizing your own personal emotions when feeling judged for being different.
- Learn to challenge societal norms that teach social prejudice.
- Develop a conceptual understanding of cultural humility that can be applied to patient care.

Activity
The student sets out to look different from a societal norm by creatively making their appearance odd, unique and likely eye catching to the typical and random viewer, an impression that will likely draw second looks and not so positive responses.
Examples: Walking about in different settings wearing sunglasses or other eyewear with one lens in and one lens missing, marking oneself with a letter on the chest or forehead, wearing winter outerwear in the heat of summer.

Students are to reflect on their experience by responding to the following questions:

- Describe the marking or unique appearance you created and the setting in which you were viewed.
- Summarize the specific verbal and nonverbal reactions you experienced.
- How did these reactions make you feel?
- Correlate this exercise to the phrase *to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes*.
- How does this exercise help you understand the concept of cultural humility?

Students share their experiences with one another to draw conclusions through class discussion on the impact of intolerance and social prejudices. Create discussion with ideas for challenging societal norms that reinforce social prejudice, especially within healthcare. Conclude by discussing the meaning of cultural humility and its application to patient care.

**Student Assessment**

Students’ individual responses to the above activity questions can be assessed for completeness, creativity, expression, quality, and depth of emotional perception and understanding of key concepts related to the activity experience. Interactive and engaging participation in class discussion should also be assessed. Use of a rubric is encouraged for higher level assessing of student performance.

**Resources**

Video SparkNotes: The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/scarlet/video-summary/

*Walk a Mile in my Shoes* Joe South tune or Elvis Presley video tribute

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=th-epsY-7mA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmkNCpfQzl


**Suggested Placement within Curriculum**

This learning activity should be placed early within any healthcare curriculum to provide a foundation on which to build knowledge, establish values and foster clinical application.