Please save the date for our upcoming CCC Breaks. All dates are online here.

**CCC-Break 5: 22.05.2019. Burning Question: What factors or behaviors lead to the success or failure in cross cultural relationships or marriage?**

The number of interracial marriages has increased 5 times since 1967. Today, approximately 17% of married couples are interracial. We have no data about "intercultural" marriages, though. In the globalized world the number of such relationships and marriages raises from year to year.

The common challenge in cross-cultural relationships is to attribute every problem to the cultural aspects. There are many levels of coping with another person in a relationship, though.

In the cross-cultural coffee break we had a close-up at the following levels:

- **Personal level** – people enjoy being together and want to spend time together
- **Family level** – dealing with family members from a different culture can be challenging. The mutual understanding can be missing.
- **Moving across class** – the differences have a big impact on the relationship
- **Historical aspects** – short stories of Indonesian-Dutch, Irish-Northern-Irish, German-Polish, and Irish-British relationships. The historical events such as decolonization, political conflicts and wars are still a vivid part of the collective memory and therefore a tense theme.
- **Geographic aspects** – the relationship is dominated by the local culture. In some daily life situations, there is something like a competition of cultures.
- **Social aspects** – for instance approach to the physical contact – different expectations in different cultures and differing communication styles, such as struggle to deal with directness for a harmony oriented person and vice versa.

Additionally, when a couple has got children, they frequently feel torn because of the two historical backgrounds. Spending time with parents and families from different cultures exposes them to contradictory messages on what is right and what is wrong. The definition of being respectful and disrespectful varies across cultures.

The person we share our life with definitely has got a huge influence on who we are. Joe's question: "Who would I be if I were married to someone else?" can be a beginning of a deep self-reflection and a conversation.
What do couples need to do to thrive in the cross-cultural relationships?

- Never take anything for granted
- Assume the best
- Encounter misunderstanding with a sense of humor and try to keep distance
- Look for compromises
- Agree upon one cultural scenario “this time” and another “cultural scenario” “next time” when finding compromises is challenging. Examples of the weddings in Finland (German and Finish influences), and in Great Britain (US-American and British influences) serve as good examples for it.
- Difficult conversations - there are some themes that are difficult to understand when you
- Learn how to deal with different styles of communication and behavior and be the mediators to reach the mutual understanding in the family and friends circles. An example: The Indian female host stays in the kitchen while hosting the guests and thanks to the explanation her behavior is now accepted by the German family members.
- Do not over and do not underestimate the role of culture
- Love because it forgives a lot

Please note that the LGTB relationships were not addressed in this coffee break, as that would raise the complexity of discussion.

Thanks for this summary of our CCC Break discussion to:
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