

Chapter 7

Working With Colleagues of All Shapes and Sizes Diversity in the Workplace

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- Identify eight specific cultural differences seen in the workplace.
- Describe how these differences impact relationships within the workplace.
- Describe five steps for overcoming cultural differences in the workplace.
- List the different generational groups and their particular traits.
- Identify how the different generational groups are similar and different.
- Describe eight ways to minimize generational conflict.
- Identify ways to promote diversity with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community in the workplace.

Every human being is different—that is a pretty obvious statement. However, it is human nature to want people to be just like ourselves—to believe what we believe and to do things the way we do them. Differences can be especially difficult to deal with when they relate to how we perform our work. However, as occupational therapists and occupational therapy students working in diverse environments, we must learn to embrace differences between people resulting from differing cultures, religions, genders, sexual preferences, and upbringing—the list is endless. How do we manage these differences, communicate with one another, and learn to work together collaboratively without rancor and conflict? How can we learn to understand and accept the differences among us and learn from one another to ensure a harmonious and inclusive work environment? That is what this chapter is all about.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

We live in a diverse country that was founded on the freedom of religion and choice, with a rich history of immigration. As a result, it is inevitable that we will be working with people who