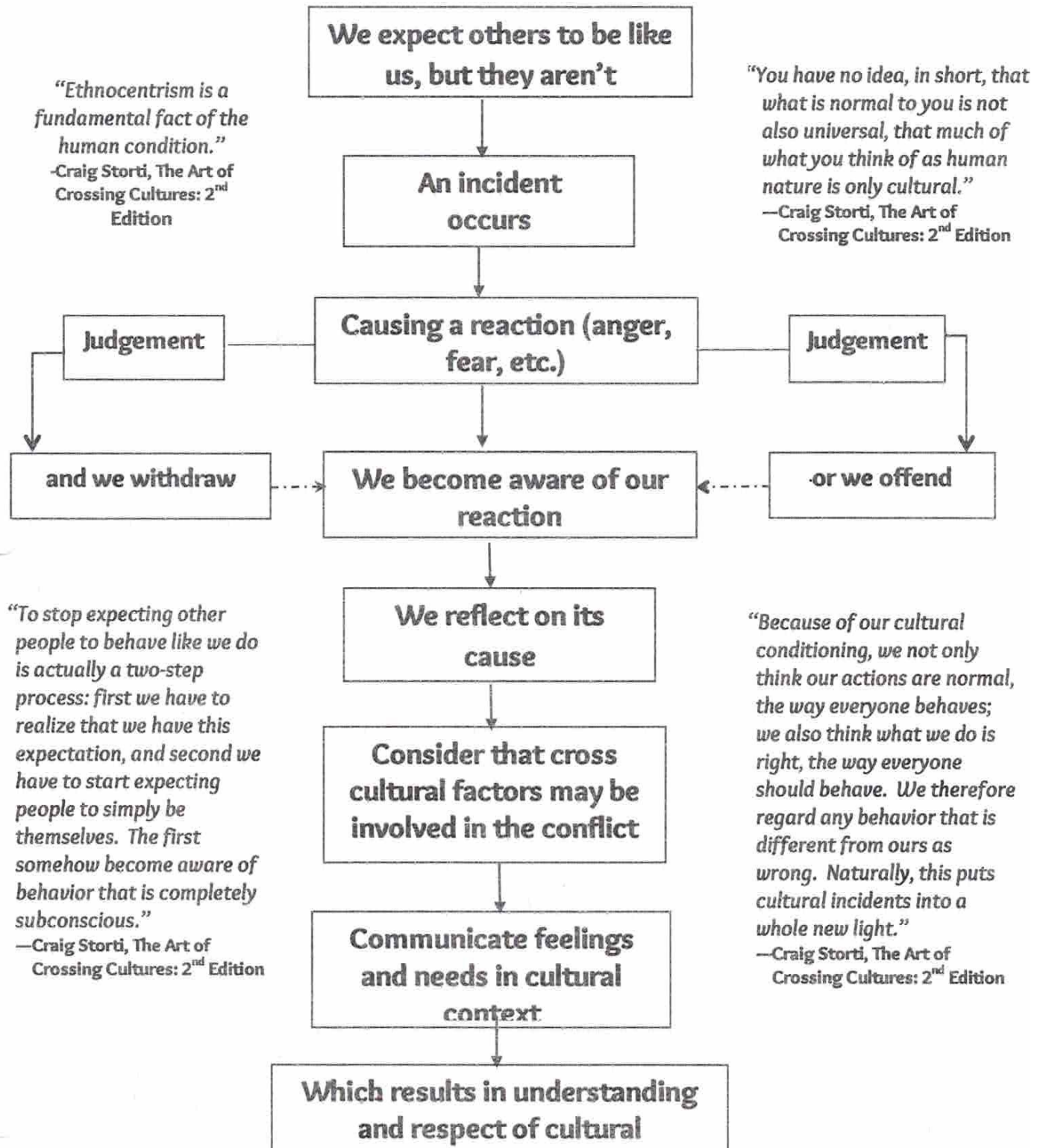


Model for Managing the Cross-Cultural Encounter



Strategies for Effectively Managing Differences

- 1) Whenever we come across differences, it becomes all the more important that we listen and try to empathize.
- 2) Try to understand how difficult it might be for the other person to be telling you about their difference, and to simply be who there are in a hostile environment (or an environment that cannot tolerate differences).
- 3) Be patient. Try not to be judgemental.
- 4) Use the opportunity when differences arise to challenge your own assumptions and values. Work towards greater self awareness and understanding.
- 5) Expect yourself (and the other person) to have strong emotional reactions during the encounter. Remind yourself that it is normal to feel frustrated, uncertain, defensive or anxious.
- 6) Managing the encounter requires that we manage the emotions that are provoked in us. Managing the emotions means attending to our emotional reaction, recognizing what we feel, stepping back from it enough to understand what cultural factors/differences are in play.

When you notice yourself or the other person having an emotional reaction, and a barrier is developing between you and the other, ask yourself if a difference in culture, values, class, etc. may be affecting the interaction. Then, try to step back and not assume that the person is being aggressive, passive, rude, difficult, dishonest, etc; rather, consider whether the behavior is appropriate for that person, given their world view and values. Try to consider differences as "just different" rather than good or bad, even when you have emotional reactions to them.
- 7) Think about both what assumptions the other person might be operating under about your role and function, as well as your own assumptions. Develop a way to clearly articulate how you function in your role, and how you can help. Know your limits in terms of what you can and cannot do; you may need to convey that you might not be the best person for this person to talk with about particular issues.
- 8) Don't expect that you will like everything about another culture, and don't try to accommodate or adjust to another cultural norm at the expense of your own self respect. But do try to change your working and social style to better accommodate and increase your effectiveness with those individuals who are different from yourself.
- 9) Increase your knowledge and understanding of how others who may be different from you generally think and act. Increase your knowledge of how people from your own culture think and act.
- 10) If you have withdrawn or offended the other person, consider what you might do to repair or rebuild the relationship.