



CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE

How Different Cultures View Elders

CHINESE

- Traditional Chinese values place the family and society over the individual. Many American-born Chinese may not be as traditional but still hold values of respect for elders and authority.
- The oldest son has obligations toward the family and is expected to respect and care for parents.
- The tradition of “filial piety” is the value of total respect for the family, especially the elders. This respect for elders was advocated by Confucius, the famous Chinese philosopher and many Chinese and Chinese-American families choose to follow these ancient principles.

NATIVE AMERICAN

- Traditionally, elders are respected for their wisdom, experience, and knowledge.
- Elders, regardless of tribe, assume significant roles as teachers and caretakers of the young.

VIETNAMESE

- Elders are given high respect in Vietnamese society. They are considered the carriers of tradition, knowledge, and wisdom. Age is considered an asset, not a liability.
- Elderly grandparents and parents stay with the family for support and care.
- Elders may prepare meals and care for grandchildren if both the husband and wife work.
- In Vietnam, elders are the leaders and decision-makers in the family and often sought for advice. When these elders move to the U.S., they can become socially and culturally isolated for many reasons (e.g., lack of English, age, lack of training for work). In contrast, the younger family members become more Americanized and may behave in ways their elders do not approve. This can create tension in families where elders feel ignored and not respected.

BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN

- Elders are respected, obeyed and considered a source of wisdom.
- To survive to old age is often considered an accomplishment reflecting personal strength, resourcefulness, and faith.

HISPANIC/LATINO

- Elders are held in high esteem.
- Old age is viewed as a positive time in the life of the elder.
- Care for elders is provided by the extended family. It is expected that children will care for their elderly parents.

KOREAN

- Traditional Koreans value filial piety and respect for elders.
- In Korean culture, children are taught to respect elders whether they are right or wrong.
- There is the expectation that the children will take care of their parents in old age.
- Two important family holidays that are celebrated with feasts include the 60th birthday and the 70th birthday.