Topic: Cultural Adjustment/Housing

Activity: Betel Nuts and Litter: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Objective	✓ Participants will consider the American concept of respecting common areas and public space ✓ Participants will understand what is considered appropriate behavior in U.S. public places
Lesson Time	20 minutes
Materials	☐ Critical incident (included) ☐ Optional: Flipchart paper, markers, tape
Introduction	Refugees may be unfamiliar with what Americans consider respectful treatment of common areas and public space in the United States. However, not following American norms regarding behavior in public areas can have serious consequences when it conflicts with health and safety laws.
Practice	(Note: Feel free to change names to reflect your participants.) 1. Put participants into small groups of 2-4 and ask each group to choose a spokesperson. 2. Read "Betel Nuts and Litter: A Critical Incident for Refugees" aloud, pausing after each set of reflection questions. 3. In small groups, participants discuss the reflection questions. Listen in on the discussions to check for understanding. 4. After the last set of reflection questions, bring the large group together and ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize the main ideas from their group discussions. Discuss as necessary.
Reflection Questions	● What happened in this critical incident? ● What could Cau have done differently? ● How can Cau change his behavior? ● What would you do if you were Cau?
Variations	● Give flipchart paper to each small group and have groups draw and present the highlights of their discussion. ● If literacy levels allow, prepare flipchart paper with reflection questions for each small group and have groups write and present their answers.

Betel Nuts and Litter: A Critical Incident for Refugees

Cau* is an older man who recently resettled as a refugee in the United States. He enjoys chewing betel nut and was happy to find it for sale in an Asian supermarket near his home. He carries a bag with him wherever he goes and spits out the seed juice like he has always done.

However, Cau's American neighbors don't like when people spit in public places, such as in the street or the hallway of their apartment building. Also, the betel juice leaves red marks on the ground that are hard to clean, and some people think they look like blood. Neighbors are also angry that Cau discards his betel nut bags on the sidewalk and in the parking lot instead of putting them in a trash can. They feel these areas are public spaces and everyone should work together to keep them clean. Cau's landlord asks Cau to stop spitting and littering in public places because it is hard to clean and his neighbors are complaining.

Stop and reflect:

- Why are Cau's neighbors upset with him?
- Why would Cau want to make his neighbors happy instead?
- What should Cau do?

Cau starts carefully putting his betel nut bags in the trash can, but he finds it hard to change his habit of spitting betel juice on the ground. After a few weeks, a neighbor calls the health department and makes a formal complaint about Cau's spitting. The health department officer talks to Cau's landlord, who tells Cau he will be evicted if he continues to spit in the public areas of the apartment complex.

Stop and reflect:

- What happened in this critical incident?
- What could Cau have done differently?
- How can Cau change his behavior?
- What would you do if you were Cau?

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