



How Can CULTURE Influence Pain Communication Styles



Direct Communicators:

- Cultures: US, Germany, Northern Europe
- Pain is described clearly and openly
- Expect straightforward questions and answers

Indirect Communicators:

- Cultures: Many Asians, Middle Eastern, and Latin Americans
- May downplay pain, avoid saying "no", or use vague terms
- Value harmony and may avoid burdening the provider

Pain Expression Differences

Expressive Pain Cultures:

- Openly show pain through facial expressions, gestures, and vocalizations
- Common in: Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, African, and Latin American groups

Stoic Pain Cultures:

- Prefer silence, minimal expression, and endurance
- Common in: Asian, Northern European, and Indigenous Communities

Beliefs About Pain & Healing



Mind-Body Connection:

- Some cultures view pain as tied to emotions, energy, or spiritual balance
- May use traditional healing alongside PT

Medical Authority Views:

- Some patients prefer following clinician instructions without asking questions
- others expect shared decision-making and detailed explanations

Common Clinical Misconceptions



- ✗ "They're exaggerating their pain."
- ✓ They may come from an expressive culture.
- ✗ "They must not be hurt; they say they're fine."
- ✓ They may be avoiding conflict or minimizing symptoms.
- ✗ "They didn't follow the HEP; they're not motivated"
- ✓ Cultural beliefs, literacy, or communication style may be influencing adherence.



PT Strategies

- Use open-ended questions ("Tell me about how this pain affects your day?")
- Avoid judging pain expression styles
- Normalize asking questions and reporting discomfort
- Confirm understanding with teach-back ("Can you explain in your own words what I just explained to you?" instead of "Do you understand?")
- Ask about cultural beliefs, remedies, or preferences

