

## SOUTH ASIAN CULTURAL TIPS

### FOOD IS IMPORTANT

Food is a delicious part of South Asian culture with great regional variety. Sharing a meal together is a great way to begin to connect. Accept an offer of chai (tea) and ask someone to teach you how to make it. Cook an Indian meal together or visit an Indian restaurant.

Hindus have a variety of practices regarding diet. There is no need to be anxious—just ask. If you are hosting it is best to:

- Avoid serving beef or pork (chicken is a good option).
- Provide some vegetarian food.

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### HOSPITALITY

• Hospitality is valued in South Asia. If you visit them, they may bring you a drink or snack without asking. This is basic hospitality.

- If they are visiting you, they may initially decline offers of food or a drink. Offer more than once.

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### GROUP ORIENTATION

While individualistic values are rising, South Asians tend to be group-oriented.

- Decisions are often made as a group.
- When possible, include them in the process of making decisions. It may take longer, but it will give ownership.
- Plans may change at the last minute because they prioritize relationships over scheduled appointments.

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### INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

• South Asians find it difficult and disrespectful to say "no" directly. They may say yes in front of you and then not show up or call at the last minute to decline. More often they will say "maybe." Maybe usually means "no."

- Be respectful and gentle if you need to decline and say "no" to them.

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### TIME ORIENTATION

• Indian society is less time oriented and more relationship oriented. Plans often remain fluid until the last minute. Be prepared to adjust and don't be easily offended.

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### SOCIAL OBLIGATION

• "Thank you" is rarely expressed verbally. It sounds artificial. Gratitude is traditionally expressed by reciprocal actions.