## EMOTIONAL LITERACY

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As seen from the cultural iceberg metaphor many of our values and beliefs are deep and below the surface of our consciousness. When we engage in intercultural interactions it is normal to experience different levels of stress. As we encounter some of the challenges we might also encounter some emotions that are hard for us to experience. Emotional literacy gives us language with which to express ourselves and also, over time, tools for managing emotions that might have a negative impact on those around us.

## DEFINITION

Steiner (1979) coined the term emotional literacy and defined it by suggesting that "to be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and the quality of your life and equally important, the quality of the life of the people around you. Emotional literacy helps your emotions work for you in instead of against you" and is a building block of emotional intelligence.

In the field of intercultural development, the understanding of one's emotions will reduce barriers in intercultural development as emotional literacy allows us to:

1. Know our feelings. | 2. Have a sense of empathy. | 3. Learn to manage our emotions. 4. Repair emotional problems. | 5. Express emotional interactivity.

## FEELING WHEEL

Plutchik (1980) developed the wheel of emotions/ emotional circle to express eight primary emotions that are the fundamentals of all other emotions. A sample Feeling Wheel is shown below. While the wheel does not express the entire range of human emotions and some groupings may not resonate with everyone, the aim of the feeling wheel is its utility as a tool to classify emotions and support the development of emotional literacy.

It is through tools such as the feeling wheel, which help us to identify and label emotions, that we move towards working with emotional literacy and think with emotion.

