



***"If you wish to improve, be content to appear clueless or stupid in extraneous matters - don't wish to seem knowledgeable. And if some regard you as important, distrust yourself."***

- Epictetus, Enchiridion, 13a, CE55-135 -

If you are receiving this newsletter on the 1st of February, it is the day when the United Kingdom will no longer be a part of the European Union. It is also the 8th day of the 15 days new year celebration for the Chinese. According to the Chinese legend, it is said to be the day when the millet was created. Millet is a rich source of protein, dietary fibre, vitamins B and minerals, part of the common staple foods for those living in East Asia or Africa. Thanks to global logistics, one can find it under



the whole-grain health-foods section in many parts of the world.

Even though the coronavirus has dampened this Chinese New Year, you can still click here if you wish to discover the [Day-by-Day Celebration for CNY](#).

Other than that, for February, there are a plenty of food celebrations in the U.S.A.: Starting with Ice-Cream for Breakfast Day (1st); Chocolate Fondue Day (5th); National "Chopsticks" Day (6th); National Pizza Day and National Bagel Day(9th); Frozen Yoghurt Day (11th); Butterscotch Day (15th); Almond Day (16th); Chocolate Mint Day (19th); Cherry Pie Day (20th); Margarita Day (22nd); Banana Bread Day (23rd); Tortilla Chip Day (24th); Clam Chowder Day and Chocolate Covered Nuts Day (25th); Pistachio Day (26th), Strawberry Day (27th); Chocolate Soufflé Day (28th); and National Frog Leg Day (29th, for the Leap year)...

There we go, we now have all the snacks and dessert plans for the month! What a lighter way to start, the sweets might help to heal the Brexit chagrin for some of us. Be mindful though of the calories these treats bring!





## A Journey A Month...

### Your Story. Our Story. The Human Story.

Last month, we spoke about time being a finite and precious resource. A month has gone by, what have you done and gained from those days? For youths applying to US universities, it is the season for interviews. As an alumna, I am one of the interviewers for my US alma mater, so it is the time when I get to meet some of these youths eager for their next steps in life.

These young candidates are usually from the top percentile of their cohorts, they come with academic achievements and rounded extra-curriculum accomplishments. For those who are familiar with university entrance interviews, one will mark the difference between the US and the UK systems. While the British try to assess the candidate's technical capability for the subject, the Americans prefer a dialogue session to evaluate if it will be a good match for both parties.

Through the dialogues with these young candidates, I get to see a world besides mine. Each session is, therefore, an excellent opportunity for me to get some "reverse-mentoring" from a young student. Usually, before the end of the interview, I will also ask the candidates to recommend their favourite books for me to read over the weekend. The best session is when a candidate connects and forgets about he or she is actually being interviewed.



According to the research of our US partner, the Cultural Intelligence Center, there are four aspects of Cultural Intelligence (CQ): 1/CQ Drive; 2/CQ Knowledge; 3/CQ Strategy and 4/CQ Action.

Notably, at TCG's cross-cultural workshops, most participants tend to become more engaged and attentive when it comes to CQ Knowledge, especially when we start discussing the "Dos" and "Don'ts" for a specific culture. While it is encouraging that a lot of interest is shown about learning a new culture but to develop our CQ fully, it is important for us not to "over-fixate" on the need for perfecting our CQ knowledge. Yes, there are some very important social norms and traditions one should know, but it is not realistic to expect "perfect" knowledge on every one of them.

Referring to the quote above, by Epictetus (the slave who became a great Stoic philosopher), sometimes, it is perfectly fine to be clueless about something; because that will allow us to focus our energy on what is more important.

Applying that to developing our CQ, if we have the curiosity, that will give us the drive to explore and interact with those different from us. Our interactions with others will form the foundation of a positive

relationship if both parties act with genuine interest and mutual respect. In the process, we may find a common goal and eventually achieve something greater.

For successful cross-cultural engagements, I think the most challenging and critical area is how we apply the CQ Strategy and CQ action. I believe the recipe for good strategy and action can only be found when we focus our energy on making the "connection." The truth is, it is really not about learning and recalling every detail of the cultural norms and taboos... it is about our effort in making the "connection" so that we can get the suitable information for the situation.



Therefore, when it comes to cross-cultural interactions, let's try not to "stick" to what we think we know, lest it takes away our curiosity to discover something new.



Be curious, take an interest, and make our own discovery by dialoguing with the person, genuinely and respectfully. Just like the interview sessions I have with those young students, I hope you will be amazed by how "rewarding" it can be when a genuine connection is made.



Our life is made up of one day at a time, and our journey is made up of one experience with one person we meet each time.

If we are opened to that experience and when a connection is made, we will find that person has, in fact, something to add to our life. That is, the gift life has for us!

**Happy connecting!**

*We, at TransCultural Group (TCG), are determined to play our parts in making the world a better place, and we have teamed up with the Cultural Intelligence Centre, U.S.A to bring their well-researched and designed CQ assessment tools to our clients in the Asia Pacific.*

*We are passionate about building bridges and breaking down walls. Please join us in our journey,*



### **Beyond Boundaries - Crossing Cultures**



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**About TransCultural Group:** *TransCultural Group (TCG) is a premier consulting firm that provides high quality learning programmes, including workshops and customised cultural experiences to those in search of traditions, values and excellence. The company is founded to provide an exclusive and unparalleled learning environment for the development of thoughtful leaders (and youths) worldwide, beyond time, space and cultural boundaries. [www.transculturalgroup.com](http://www.transculturalgroup.com).*

*A typical TCG's workshop will start with a CQ assessment (either CQ Pro for Professionals, or CQ for Youth for students) as the first step, followed by discussion and interactive sessions to understand how they may further increase their cultural intelligence. If you are interested in TCG's programmes, please reach out to us: [contact@transculturalgroup.com](mailto:contact@transculturalgroup.com).*

