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I am the youngest of three girls. Both of my sisters are still living as well as my mother. No one in my current family has any serious medical problems. My father died in 1989 at age 54, after a five year battle with cancer, the day before my twenty-seventh birthday. I do not have any living grandparents but was able to have a relationship with a great-grandmother until my high school years. I have not had a grandfather since age 3. I have been married twice and I am the third wife of my present husband of nineteen years. I have a son who was fathered by my first husband, a step-son from my husband's second marriage and another son from my current marriage. My oldest is named after my father and my youngest was born on my father's birthday in 1991 and is named after my husband. My husband is thirteen years older than I. He is a veteran of the United States Navy and disabled due to post-traumatic stress disorder from experiences working on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier during the Vietnam War. I am in college as my youngest is a junior in high school, my husband is retired and disabled and my oldest is married. We are active in each family member's interests such as my husband's veterans association and my son's school and acting activities. We have a middle class income and three cars with over 100,000 miles each. We have a mortgage, cable television, cell phones and three cars with over 100,000 miles each. We do not have any credit cards and we do not have a large amount of money in savings. I was raised attending a Baptist church and my husband was raised attending a Methodist church. We do not attend church now even though we have strong religious beliefs. This is who I am.

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The preceding paragraph states the demographics and some specifics about my background and my family. Some of the facts stated are evident when you meet me, others are not so clear. I believe that every event in our lives has a purpose. Certainly every event has an impact on our lives even though it may be years later before we realize it. For every fact I stated about my family and my past there is an opinion or behavior affected in some way. It is difficult to imagine how much the events in our lives can change the way we view others and their situations. Social class, religious beliefs, moral beliefs and cultural biases are all examples of areas we may differ with our clients. I have the ethical obligation to examine each of these areas and any others before I can effectively communicate with clients.

Social class is not always chosen. Difficulties in life such as sickness, loss of employment or family upsets can drastically change the social or socioeconomic class to which an individual belongs and is able to relate. I have never lived in extreme poverty nor have I ever lived a wealthy lifestyle. I have been through some times when I was a single parent that were very lean but I still had my family to fall back on if I needed to. I have tried to always view others who are struggling with extreme poverty like this, "We are all just a payday away from being in the same situation no matter how safe you think you are". I try to empathize with others even though I have not really been where they are in respect to poverty.

Religious beliefs are often ingrained in children at a young age. This is not to say that when those children become adults that they continue to conform

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to those early learned beliefs. As an adult I have become more aware of the beliefs of others around me. I do not always understand how or what they believe but I think that some belief in a higher power serves as a source of comfort and hope during difficult times of our lives. In return, individuals worship and pray to the one whom they believe is in control of their lives and the rest of the universe. I believe in the Christian God and the birth, death and resurrection of God. I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that everyone will be judged in the life hereafter according to how they have lived their lives. I have not studied other religions but I would guess that some form of these beliefs is prevalent in most religions. We believe certain things about life, afterlife and our Creator because we have faith in what we have been taught. Everyone has the same right to seek comfort from a higher power whether it is the same one I believe in or not. Some may not believe in any higher power that has control over what happens but they do have their own thoughts about why things happen and that is what grounds them in their lives. I do feel strongly about what I believe but I also give others room for their own beliefs because they could be right too.

Moral beliefs for me surpass those things which we are taught in connection with our religious beliefs such as The Ten Commandments. Patriotism is a moral to me. I am married to a veteran who is very proud to have served this country when war was not popular. He was not well received when he returned home but has realized over the years that political influences and media influences shaped the public opinion of the young men serving the country in those times. War is not popular now either but as a society most people have

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learned to appreciate those who are willing to risk the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. This is an area I struggle with when it comes to being objective. I think we should all say the pledge to the flag, stand up for the National Anthem and take off hats when the flag is passing. I do not believe that everyone will ever see things the same when it comes to how to run this country but that is why we are a democracy. That is also why people from around the world struggle to come to this country for a taste of freedom. I have strong biases about pride in our country and need to check myself carefully when dealing with clients who are dissatisfied with it. I have not been in the situation to have to deal with this yet but I will need to be careful when the situation does arise.

Cultural biases are becoming more and more prominent in the public. Recent events with regard to terrorism have shaped opinions about other cultures. There has always been an undercurrent of cultural biases in the south due to opinions about African-Americans. I believe this is still the most prominent bias in this area today. I was raised by a family who just did not talk about it. There were no African-Americans that I went to school or church with. I have been fortunate to have children who have gone to school with other children from other cultures and it has in turn exposed me as an adult to different cultures. I have always wanted my children to be able to communicate with anyone regardless of their skin color or country of origin. This is not something that we have to discuss at length in our family. It is the norm. I am fascinated by the routines of other cultures and might even ask why some things are done a certain way. For instance, I was employed at a hospital one time where I was the

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only Caucasian on my shift. Everyone else was African-American. We were all friends and often asked each other “Why do ya’ll do things like that?” One time I was curious about why they all opened their cigarettes from the bottom of the pack so I ask, thinking there was some mysterious reason for it. The reason was simply that they did not want to touch the filter end that would be going in their mouth with dirty hands! I thought that was just about the smartest thing I had ever heard.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I try my very best to be open minded about most things. Social status, religious beliefs, moral beliefs and cultural biases are all areas of growth, I believe, throughout life. I will continue to try to learn new things from colleagues and clients to broaden my perspective on the world I live in and the impact my actions and behaviors have on those around me. I also think it is of extreme importance to try to help others view things in a different perspective whenever possible, especially the children and youth we have influence over.