Improving Your Ability to Manage Differences

We are headed to Bali and Lombok, Indonesia next week and of course, I'm thrilled and privileged to be taking such a trip. We will be diving, surfing and if we're lucky, climbing Rinjani, an active volcano on Lombok with a rim at 12,000 feet.

Along the way, we will stop at many small villages and hope to immerse ourselves in the culture, art, music, dance and most importantly, the food!

I've always loved international travel and still maintain an active wanderlust, even after many trips across many seas. I always learn something new about how different cultures handle their lives and I'm blessed to have my own narrow world view challenged and expanded.

As we conduct a lot of diversity workshops, I'm reminded of how lucky I've been to learn about the world in this way. As most organizations become more diverse, and serve a more diverse customer base, thinking about changing our perceptions of others' cultures and ideas is imperative. While you may not be on your way to Indonesia, what can you do to improve your perceptions of why the people you manage think and act the way they do? Can you see a foreign movie or even an American one that is about someone very different from you? Can you read a novel written by an Asian or a South American author? Visit a restaurant with new food in a part of town you rarely visit and actually talk to the hostess, your server and even the chef?

Working to open up our minds always pays off in the way we interact with others, and travel to other lands is never wasted time -- even if it's just in our dreams!

For more ideas and tips on managing differences, see my book Stop Pissing Me Off! What To do When Your Co-Workers Drive You Crazy.