

CULTURAL ADAPTATION

1 **Adventure!**
Everything seems new and exciting. You are nervous, lost, and eager to figure things out and get to know people.

2 **Culture Shock**
Disorientation and anxiety. The rules, meanings, values of this new culture don't make sense or go against your own culture. Your body is unhappy about new foods, climate, routines, illness. Difficulties communicating, loss of status, feeling incompetent, like a child. Homesickness and grieving, loneliness, sometimes depression. Hostility towards host culture--complaining, withdrawal.

Getting the hang of it

Environment feels more familiar; you have more desire to belong. More able to handle work, daily life. Continued feelings of dissatisfaction, but with more sense of humor, more enjoyment.

3

4 **Balance**
You evaluate the new culture in a more balanced way. Some things you like, some things you don't. You have more solid feeling of belonging, of who you are and what you want to accomplish in this environment.

5 **Integration**
You are committed to being part of the new culture for the long term. You may assimilate. Or you may become bicultural, able to style switch between your new and home cultures--shifting your language, behavior, and thinking with little effort.

Re-entry

Going home can be an even greater culture shock than coming to the new culture was. You have changed. The people at home have changed. Your "place" has perhaps been filled by others. Yet both sides may expect relationships and behaviors to be the same as before. People may be envious, or feel you have become a foreigner.

6

EASING “CULTURE SHOCK”

Are you "in shock?"

- *Anxiety*
- *Loneliness*
- *Difficulty sleeping*
- *Sleeping too much*
- *Hostile feelings*
- *Can't solve simple problems*
- *Avoiding local people, seeking out people from your own country/language*
- *Loss of identity*
- *Feeling incompetent, like a child, vulnerable*
- *Feeling exploited, ignored, lost*
- *Strong homesickness*
- *Often tired or unwell*
- *Worrying about health, cleanliness*

Some suggestions for handling “culture shock”

1. Expect uncertainty, confusion, irritation. Your new environment is complex. It will take time to understand and adapt.
2. Make physical activity part of your daily routine.
3. Maintain connections with others from your own country.
4. Put effort into your work and friendship relationships.
5. Find ways to live with the things that you don't find 100% satisfactory.
6. Continue to follow your plans for the future.
7. If you feel stressed or depressed, look for help.
8. Find people who can explain the local culture and advise you on how to handle situations.
9. Observe. Try to describe “what happened” separate from your own feelings and interpretations about what happened.
10. Find a hobby or other group activity outside of work.
11. Join in, even if it feels like “roleplaying” not belonging.