

CULTURE SHOCK

What is "Culture Shock?"

- Culture shock may be experienced by any person who spends an extended period of time in a new or different culture.
- The shock of adjustment is normal and perhaps universal.
- Culture shock refers to the anxiety experienced when one experiences the loss of their home culture, family and support system and is confronted with the task of assimilating a new culture.
- Culture shock can be experienced in stages.

Common Signs & Symptoms of Culture Shock

- *Anxiety*
- *Sadness*
- *Depression*
- *Pain, despair, and disorganisation*
- *Anger, confusion, loneliness (i.e. no social/familial support)*
- *Loss of appetite, changes in sleep patterns*
- *Lack of energy, loss of enjoyment in daily activities, withdrawal from others*

Stages of "Culture Shock"

• **Honeymoon Stage**

This is characterised by exhilaration, discovery and anticipation. Perceptions are positive. Emotions include excitement and euphoria.

• **Disintegration Stage**

The novelty wears off and host culture begins to intrude on the visitor's life. This stage is characterised by confusion, frustration, loss, depression and withdrawal.

• **Reintegration**

The individual is likely to disregard both similarities and the differences between the host culture and the home culture. This stage is characterised by hostility, defensive behaviour, feelings of vulnerability, rebellion, blame, rejection of all that host culture represents.

• **Autonomy**

This is the hopeful stage. The person begins to establish an objective, balanced and impartial view of the situation and experience. There is a new sensitivity to the host culture and greater awareness of self and others. The person is less dependent on others and is more relaxed.

- **Interdependence**

This stage aims at the goal of a bi-cultural or multicultural identity. This stage is characterised by a sense of belonging, trust, and sensitivity to the host culture.

How to Cope with "Culture Shock"

- *Know that your reactions are normal*
- *Speak with a counsellor*
- *Stay in contact with your family and friends*
- *Seek students from your own cultural background who have adjusted to the experience*
- *Seek other new international students for support*
- *Seek Australian students who can help you learn about their culture*
- *Join a student or community group*
- *Join a study group*
- *Get a tutor in your major subject area (contact departments)*
- *Get help with study skills*
- *Talk to your advisors and lecturers about expectation and academic goals*

Adapted from article by **International Student & Scholar Services, University of South Florida.**



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