

## Tips for a Good Year with Host Family

(by Brian Campbell, former CBYXer)

### 1. Communication

Be very open with your family, and keep them up to date on your weekly schedules and commitments. They probably will like to know what you have been up to and what exactly you will have going on in the near future. This is especially important weekends, when different family members have different plans and activities. Also, communicate openly when you are having a problem and need help, especially with the parents.

### 2. Small Talk

In the same way that you probably engaged friends and close family members in small talk on a daily basis at home, you should regularly talk with host family members about daily occurrences in their lives and in yours. This will be difficult in German, but as you practice more and more, it will become much easier and is a key both a healthy relationship with the host family and the progress of your language skills.

### 3. Chores

Talk to your host parents and determine right away what is expected of you as far as chores and helping around the house is concerned. If you are given regular chores, do them, but also make a point to spontaneously provide help with little things around the house, such as cleaning off the dinner table.

### 4. Time Together

It is very possible that your German family will spend quite a bit of time with one another in the evenings, particularly around dinner time. Make an effort to stay around afterwards and involve yourself in the conversation. Avoid going up to the room every night as soon as the meal is finished. This tends to send the family a negative signal.

### 5. Time at home

Balance your time spent at home with your time spent at work, in activities, and with friends. You should avoid always hanging around the house and staying in your room too much, but also make a point to be around when the family gets together or has company on the weekend. Once again, involve yourself in the family social life and routines.

### 6. Computer/TV Usage

It is likely that you'll have access to a computer and even more likely that you'll have access to television. Avoid using a computer or television to isolate yourself during your year. For language learning purposes, watching television a little bit each day is usually beneficial, but this should not be overdone. As for the computer, avoid spending too much time writing or chatting with friends from home because this takes away from your time in Germany. Also, if you have questionable file sharing programs for music, delete them. Users of these programs are fined heavily in Germany.

### 7. Friends

Making and maintaining friends is one of the most important aspects of your year. When new friends ask you to do something, especially early in the year, really try to take advantage of it in order to go out and meet people. As at home, don't be involved in something that's shady or questionable, but really try to get out there and meet people your

age. When doing this, however, let your host family know what you are doing and where to intend to go.

#### **8. Hobbies**

Try to develop a couple hobbies or get yourself to participate in a couple activities during your year. Keeping yourself busy with something other than work is important for an enjoyable year, and this will allow you to have another dimension in your life outside of the workplace and the host family.

#### **9. Conflicts**

No family is perfect, no matter how functional, and your host family will not always be perfect either. When family members argue or there are conflicts in the house, try not to involve yourself or to choose sides. If a host sibling wants to talk, be a good listener, but don't meddle in the arguments of family members who have lived their whole lives with one another. Try to be an innocent bystander.

#### **10. Commonsense**

Basically, all of these tips are based on commonsense (gesunder Menschenverstand). Use rationality, put things in perspective, and try not to get too down when things sometimes don't go well. Mistakes and embarrassments are part of the exchange experience, but they also allow you to improve as a person during your year abroad. Learn from your little failures, and be open to change during this process.

## TIPS FOR A SMOOTH RUNNING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR HOST FAMILY

**Remember:**

Being a guest means that you should socialize with your host family. Don't forget that you are not staying at a hotel!

Do things yourself for the host family and do not expect them to be your servants.

At the beginning you should ask your host family about house rules, so you know what is expected of you.

Discuss things like washing the dishes, doing the laundry, cleaning up your room etc.

Be tidy: after use clean the bath tub and wash the basin; if necessary use the toilet brush; make your bed before leaving the room; turn off the lights, switch off any electrical appliances and lower the heat.

Take part in activities offered by your host family.

Show interest, ask questions, show your appreciation.

Say „please“ and „thank you“- these are magical words in Germany.

Always say a greeting (e.g. when entering a room) and say good-bye when leaving.

You might offer to prepare a meal of your country or one of your specialities. The host family will love this.

You may surprise your host family occasionally with small gifts (flowers, sweets, a book).

Tell your host family about any plans you might have ahead of time- especially about trips or if you have a friend visiting. Most families do not like to be surprised about things they have not been informed about.

Call home if you are to arrive back later than expected.

It is important to discuss the use of the telephone.

When and how are you going to pay for your calls?

Try not to talk to long because other members of the family need to be reached.

It is impolite in Germany to make telephone calls after 10 p.m.

If there are small children in your host family, offer to baby sit, take the children for an occasional outing in the park/ playground. You will be looked up to as an older brother/sister and it is an excellent time to practice your German.

Be punctual for appointments and meals. Telephone if you see a delay.

Never borrow money from your host family! Pay all of your own expenses. If someone drives you somewhere offer to pay your share of the gas bill.

Follow the rules of the family or the house.

That could be for instance at the dinner table: wait to start eating until everybody got their food on the plate, stay seated until everybody at the table is finished.

Take your shoes off after entering the house.

If you are not sure ask your host family or observe carefully.

Remember the Roman motto: „WHEN IN ROME, DO AS THE ROMANS DO.“ and try to accept: “It's not better, it's not worse, it's just different.”

## Example for an online anti culture shock training:

Dear Ryan,

I am absolutely amazed how much your voice changed from last time we spoke and now (so much stronger and self confident).

As described in our phone conversation here is your third assignment to help you to overcome the culture shock:

Please email me every evening from now on at least one good thing or more you

- experienced
- discovered

or

- that made you happy

during your day and tell me why you found it good.

This just may be one little sentence, but can be more as well.

Best,

Hartwig



## CROSSING THE CULTURE

The following material is adapted from *The Art of Crossing Cultures* by Craig Storti, published by The Intercultural Press, Inc. (Yarmouth, Maine) in 1990.

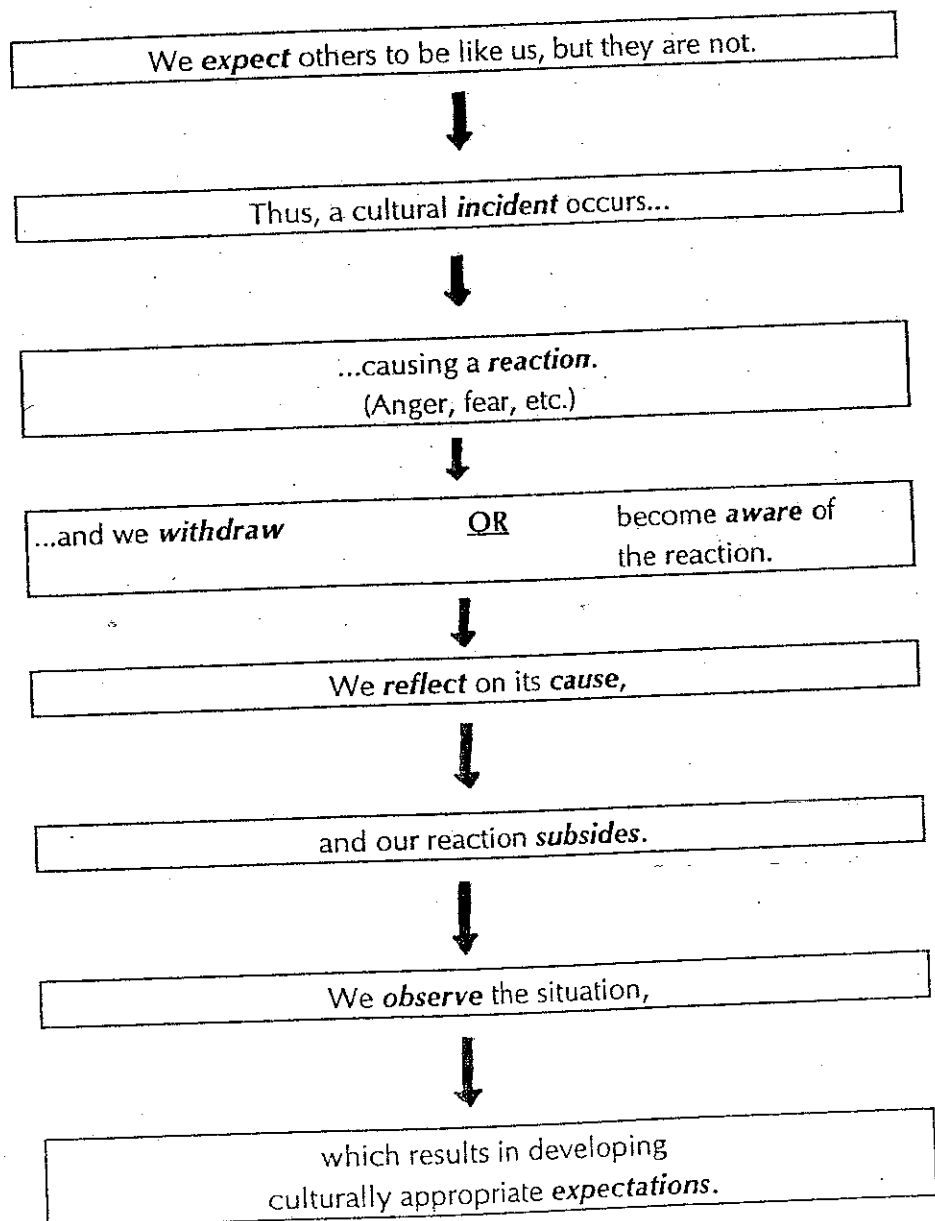
To adjust to another culture, two processes must occur:

1. WE MUST ADJUST TO LOCAL BEHAVIOR WHICH ANNOYS OR CONFUSES US, and
2. WE MUST ADJUST OUR BEHAVIOR SO AS TO NOT ANNOY OR CONFUSE THE LOCALS.

In Craig Storti's book, these are described as follows:

Type I incident: when we are annoyed, confused, upset or disoriented by the local culture.

Type II incident: when our behavior has this effect on members of the local population.



## How to Decrease Cross-Cultural Barriers

Listed below are some ways that may help you decrease cross-cultural communication barriers.

### 1. Language

- A. Learn the language
- B. Find someone who can speak the language
- C. Ask for clarification if you are not sure what the person said

### 2. Non-Verbal Communication

- A. Do not assume you understand any non-verbal communication unless you are familiar with the culture.
- B. If the non-verbal communication is insulting to your culture, do not take it personally.
- C. Develop an awareness of your own non-verbal communication which might be insulting in certain cultures.

### 3. Preconceptions and Stereotypes

- A. Make every effort to increase awareness of your own preconceptions and stereotypes of culture you encounter.
- B. With this awareness, reinterpret their behavior from their cultural perspective.
- C. Be willing to test, adapt and change your own stereotypes to fit your new experiences.

### 4. Evaluation

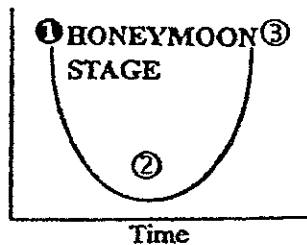
- A. Maintain objectivity.
- B. Recognize that you cannot change a person's culture overnight.
- C. Do not judge someone from another culture by your own cultural values until you have come to know them and their cultural values first.

### 5. Stress

Cross-cultural situations are often ambiguous and result in stress because you are not sure what others expect of us or what you can expect of them. As cross-cultural barriers are reduced, you can expect the level of stress to diminish.

## STAGES OF ACCULTURATION

Level of...  
comfort  
satisfaction  
effectiveness



"Isn't this exciting?"

"Aren't they interesting?"

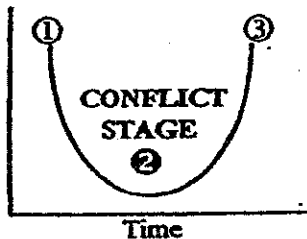
"I can't wait to tell \_\_\_\_\_ all about this."

"Everything here is so \_\_\_\_\_."

### Characteristics of the Honeymoon Stage

- ⊗ You're busy taking care of business (registration, apartment, bank account, etc.)
- ⊗ You're observing the new culture and familiarizing yourself with the new environment
- ⊗ You're meeting useful and friendly university staff
- ⊗ You're making your first social contacts with members of the host culture
- ⊗ You're seeing and doing new things and enjoying a new world
- ⊗ You may be enjoying increased material comfort
- ⊗ You have a feeling of excitement, adventure, and optimism
- ⊗ You feel proud that you can make yourself understood in the target language and that you can understand native speakers

Level of...  
comfort  
satisfaction  
effectiveness



"We would never do THAT in MY country!"

"Why can't they just \_\_\_\_\_?"

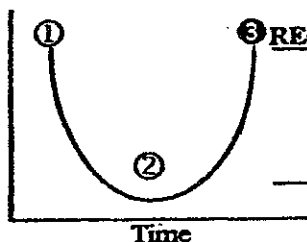
"These people are so \_\_\_\_\_."

"Only \_\_\_ more months before I can go home."

### Characteristics of the Conflict Stage

- ⊗ You begin to desire more personal relationships with members of the host culture
- ⊗ You find you have little time or opportunity to make friends
- ⊗ You feel isolated and out of place
- ⊗ You may feel tired, sick, depressed, angry, or frustrated
- ⊗ You have a growing awareness that your home culture's behaviors may not be accepted in the host culture, and you may have to temporarily give up, suspend, or modify your own behavior
- ⊗ Your high expectations remain unmet
- ⊗ You blame the host culture for your problems
- ⊗ You spend lots of time with members of your home culture complaining about the host culture
- ⊗ You experience problems with the subtleties of the target language

Level of...  
comfort  
satisfaction  
effectiveness



"Well, why shouldn't they say/do that?"

"Actually, I'm beginning to like this."

"We do that, too, only in a different way."

"You don't understand them like I do."

### Characteristics of the Critical Period

- ⊗ You choose to become an "explorer" in the new culture
- ⊗ You accept the challenge of self-reflection
- ⊗ You assume responsibility for your own cultural adjustment

### Characteristics of the Recovery Stage

- ⊗ Your language skills improve noticeably
- ⊗ You begin to understand why members of the host culture do what they do
- ⊗ You have finally made friends
- ⊗ You feel part of the community
- ⊗ You develop a greater tolerance for what is strange and new in the host culture
- ⊗ You become a mediator between the two cultures

## CULTURE SHOCK

One problem you are likely to encounter is culture shock. "Culture Shock" is the term used to describe the reactions to the psychological disorientation most people experience when they move for an extended period of time into a culture markedly different from their own. It can cause intense discomfort, often accompanied by hyper-irritability, bitterness, resentment, homesickness, and depression. In some cases distinct physical symptoms can occur.

For some people the bout with culture shock is brief and hardly noticeable. These are usually people whose personalities provide them with a kind of natural immunity. For most of us, however, culture shock is something you'll have to deal with during your stay. Culture shock is the occupational hazard you have to be willing to go through in order to have the pleasures of experiencing other countries and cultures in depth.

All of us have known frustration at one time or another. Although related, culture shock is different from frustration. Frustration is always traceable to a specific action or cause and goes away when the situation is remedied or the cause is removed.

Some common causes of frustration are:

The situation seems so immense.

Not understanding the culture and what is expected of you.

The situation not matching the ideas of what you imagined.

Unrealistic goals.

Not being able to understand why your host brother or sister is mad at you.

Not being able to notice results right away

- because of the largeness of the need.
- because of the shortness of the time.

Using the wrong methods to achieve objectives (i.e., methods which are inappropriate to the new culture).

Frustration may be uncomfortable, but it is generally short-lived as compared to culture shock.



Culture shock has two quite distinctive features:

1. It does not result from a specific event or series of events. It comes instead from the experience of encountering ways of doing, organizing, perceiving or valuing things which are different from yours and which threaten your basic, unconscious belief that your customs, assumptions, values and behaviors are "right."
2. It does not strike suddenly or have a single principal cause. Instead it is cumulative. It builds up slowly, from a series of small events which are difficult to identify.

Culture shock comes from:

- Being cut off from the cultural cues and known patterns with which you are familiar -- especially the subtle, indirect ways you normally have of expressing feelings. All the nuances and shades of meaning that you understand instinctively and use to make your life comprehensible are suddenly taken from you.
- Living over an extended period of time in a situation that is uncertain.
- Having your own values (which you had heretofore considered as absolutes) brought into question - which yanks your moral rug out from under you.
- Being continually put into positions in which you are expected to function with maximum skill and speed but where the rules have not been adequately explained.

Regarding being cut off from your own cultural cues, Kalvero Oberg, the man which first diagnosed culture shock, says:

"These signs and clues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life; when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, and how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not ..."

These are just a few examples, but they show how pervasive is the disorientation out of which culture shock emerges.

## THE PROGRESSIVE STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock progresses slowly. One's first reaction to different ways of doing things may be "How quaint!" When it becomes clear that the differences are not simply quaint, and effort is frequently made to dismiss them by pointing out the fundamental sameness of human nature. After all, people are really basically the same under the skin, aren't they?

Eventually, the focus shifts to the differences themselves, sometimes to such an extent that they seem to be overwhelming. The final stage comes when the differences are narrowed down to a few of the most troubling and then are blown up out of proportion. (For instance, for Americans, standards of cleanliness, attitudes toward punctuality, and the value of human life tend to loom especially large.)

By now the sojourner is in an acute state of distress. The host culture has become the scapegoat for the natural difficulties inherent in the cross-cultural encounter. Culture shock has set in.

**Here is a list of some symptoms that may be observed in relatively severe cases of culture shock.**

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal (e.g., spending excessive amounts of time reading; only seeing other Americans; avoiding contact with host families)
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating
- Compulsive drinking
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Family tension and conflict
- Stereotyping of host nationals
- Hostility toward host nationals
- Unexplainable fits of weeping
- Physical ailments (psychosomatic illnesses)

Not everyone will experience this severe a case of culture shock, nor will all the symptoms be observed. Many people ride through culture shock with some ease, only now and again experiencing the more serious reactions. But many others don't. For them it is important to know:

1) that the above responses can occur, 2) that culture shock is in some degree inevitable, and 3) that their reactions are emotional and not easily subject to rational management. This knowledge should give you a better understanding of what is happening to you and strengthen your resolve to work at hastening your recovery.

Before we examine what you can do to counteract culture shock, let's spend a few minutes finding where it fits into the whole overseas experience.

Some time ago people began to recognize that there were distinct stages of personal adjustment which virtually everyone who lived abroad went through (no matter where they came from or what country they were living in). These stages are:

1. Initial euphoria
2. Irritability and hostility
3. Gradual adjustment
4. Adaptation or bi-culturalism.

### **1. Initial euphoria**

Most people begin their stay with great expectations and positive mind-set. If anything, they come with expectations which are too high and attitudes that are too positive toward the host country and towards their own prospective experiences. At this point, anything new is intriguing and exciting. But, for the most part, it is the similarities which stand out. The recent arrive is usually impressed with how people everywhere are really very much alike.

This period of euphoria may last for a week or longer, but the letdown is inevitable. You've reached the end of the first stage.

### **2. Irritation and hostility**

Gradually, your focus turns from the similarities to the differences. And these differences, which suddenly seem to be everywhere, are troubling. You blow up little, seemingly insignificant difficulties into major catastrophes. This is the stage generally identified as "culture shock," and you may experience any of the symptoms on the previous page.

### **3. Gradual adjustment**

The crisis is over and you are on your way to recovery. This step may come so gradually that, at first, you will be unaware it's even happening. Once you begin to orient yourself and to be able to interpret some of the subtle cultural clues and cues which passed by unnoticed earlier, the culture seems more familiar. You become more comfortable in it and feel less isolated from it.

Gradually, too, your sense of humor returns and you realize the situation is not hopeless after all.

### **4. Adaptation and bi-culturalism**

Full recovery will result in an ability to function in two cultures with confidence. You will even find a great many customs, ways of doing and saying things, and personal attitudes which you enjoy -- indeed, to which you have in some degree acculturated -- and which you will definitely miss when you pack up and return home. In fact, you can expect to experience "reverse culture shock" upon your return to the U.S. In some cases, particularly

where a person has adjusted exceptionally well to the host country, reverse culture shock may cause greater distress than the original culture shock.

The interesting thing about culture shock is that there are routinely not one but two low points and, even more interestingly, they will accommodate themselves to the amount of time you intend to spend in the host country! That is, they will spread themselves out if you're going to stay for a longer period or contract if your initial visit is for a shorter time. You can't say that's not accommodating!

How long will culture shock last?

As we have suggested, that varies with the length of your visit. But it also depends to some extent on you and your resiliency. You can expect a let-up after the first dip, but be prepared for the second downturn which will probably be somewhat more severe.

Stop a moment and consider what you can do on your own to combat the onset and alleviate the effect of culture shock. What we have written so far is the key.

### **PRESCRIPTION FOR CULTURE SHOCK**

Granted that culture shock is virtually inevitable in some degree and that there are no easy remedies in the medicine cabinet, there are, nevertheless, things you can do. There are positive steps you can take to minimize the impact, and the sooner you take them, the better.

Here's our prescription for action:

1. Learn all you can about your host country. One of the best antidotes to culture shock - though when you're in the midst of it this may not make sense - is knowing as much as possible about where you are.
2. Look for logical reasons behind everything in the host culture which seems strange, difficult, confusing, or threatening. Even if your "reason" is wrong, it will reinforce the positive attitude that in fact there is a logical explanation behind the things you observe in the host culture. Take every aspect of your experience and look at it from the perspective of your hosts. Find patterns and interrelationships. All the pieces fit together once you discover where they go. Relax your grip on your own culture a little in the process. There's no way you can lose it (any more than you could forget to speak English), but letting go a bit may open up some unexpected avenues of understanding.
3. Don't succumb to the temptation to belittle the host culture. Resist making jokes and comments ("Well, what else would you expect from these people?") which are intended to illustrate the stupidity of the "natives," and don't hang around the Americans who do this; they will only reinforce your unhappiness. Every cultural

experience has people who have not been able to adjust to the country. They sit around waiting for someone to talk about traveling so they can indoctrinate them on the "stupidity of the native." You see, they have high stakes involved, if they can get you to parrot back their gripes, it proves them right. Avoid these people like the plague! The sickness they are attempting to spread is far worse than any culture shock you will ever experience.

4. Identify a host national (a neighbor, someone at school, a friendly acquaintance) who is sympathetic and understanding, and talk with that person about specific situations and about your feelings related to them. Talking with Americans can be helpful but only to a limited extent (and not at all under certain circumstances -- see the previous item on this list). Your problem lies in your relationship to the host culture.
5. **Keep a Journal.** Write down all of the things - and feelings - you are experiencing. Putting your emotions into words is the first step in understanding what's "bothering" you. Besides, the journal is a wonderful keepsake of your experience.
6. **Get Busy!** Get out and meet people, get *INVOLVED* in activities you enjoy.
7. ***Make a Friend!*** Open yourself to new people and new friendships, and you will embrace your experience to the fullest.
8. Above all, *have faith* - in yourself, in the essential good will of your hosts, and in the positive outcome of the experience.

### SKILLS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Some people seem to take to another culture more naturally than others. Some foreign cultures seem to be easier for Americans to adjust to than others. But there are certain skills or traits which you may have -- or, with a little effort, develop -- which will facilitate your rapid adjustment.

Before going on, jot down some of the skills -- they are usually attitudes, ways of responding, and styles of behaving -- which you think might be most helpful in the overseas adjustment process.

Here are the skills which our experience has shown to be the most important:

- Tolerance for Ambiguity
- Realistic goal/task orientation
- Open-mindedness
- Non-judgementalness
- Empathy
- Sensitivity for the feelings of others
- Communication
- Flexibility; adaptability

- Curiosity
- Sense of humor
- Warmth in human relationships
- Motivation
- Self-reliance
- Strong sense of self
- Tolerance for differences
- Perceptiveness
- Ability to fail

Add to these any of yours which we did not list. Then on a scale of one (low) to five (high), rate yourself in each of these characteristic. Total them. If you scored less than 55, you've got some work to do.

Now circle the traits you think are the most important (or guess what our choices are -- it'll be no surprise that we're going to tell you).

Our choices:

1. Sense of humor
2. Realistic goal/task orientation
3. Ability to fail

A sense of humor is important because there is going to be much to weep or get angry or annoyed or embarrassed or discouraged about -- no matter how many of the other traits you have, the ability to laugh things off will be the ultimate weapon against despair.

Americans abroad too often undertake tasks that are unrealistic and set goals for themselves that are unattainable. It is one of the major causes of failure. To the extent that you set your goals too high and refuse to adjust them to the realities of what can actually be accomplished in a foreign environment, you're going to be disappointed. Experience shows that Americans who are realistically goal-oriented or task-driven, and more able to relax and ride with events, tend to be more effective and enjoy themselves overseas.

The ability to tolerate failure is critical because:

1. Everyone fails at something overseas; it is absolutely built in.
2. The goals in the American culture are "achievement" and "success,"
3. Some people going abroad have never experienced failure. If, in addition, they have little tolerance for it, they are in for trouble as are those who live with them.

*L. Robert Kolls*  
1991



You'll soon find yourself in a foreign land, surrounded by many new and sometimes discomfoting sights, sounds, and customs. As you busy yourself trying to make sense of everything, it's extremely important that you remember where you're coming from.

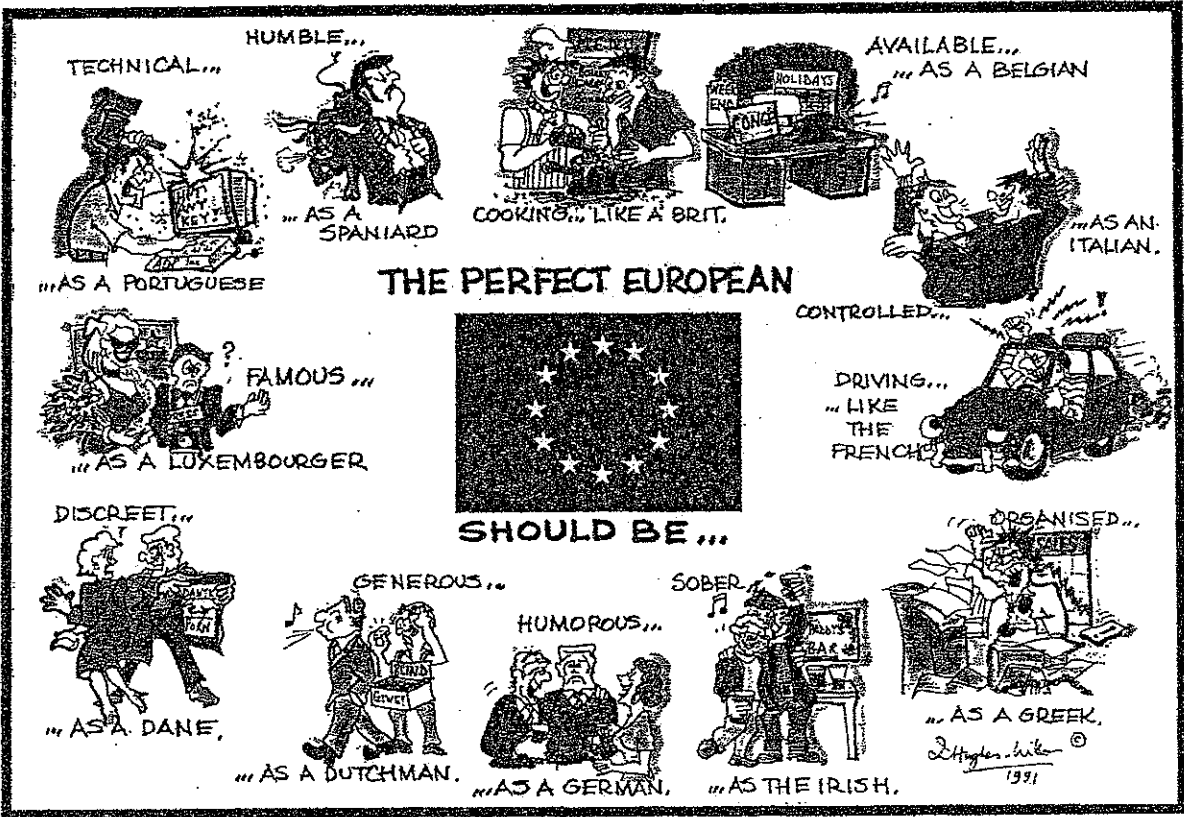
No matter how much you pride yourself in being open-minded or free-thinking, it's inevitable that what you've experienced in life so far will influence how you interpret what you discover.

Here in America (or in any other culture in which you've spent much time) you've been exposed to certain cultural values over and over again. For example, maybe you think that unshaven legs on women or making slurping noises when eating soup are low class, but that's just us. There are places, for example, where you might find a restaurant full of classy-looking, soup-slurping, hairy-legged women. The person who's got no class might turn out to be you if, at the end of your meal at the same restaurant, you give your arms a nice, long stretch above your head!

In short, once abroad you should be on guard against the tendency to judge others by the cultural norms with which you've grown up. Here are some potential points of cultural clash:

- Time: here we emphasize being on time ("Time is money! Don't keep others waiting"), but in some places our punctuality is pushiness
- Our belief in public education as a way to offer equal opportunity to all might be seen in some other countries as just dropping standards to the lowest common denominator.
- A car is a means of achieving independence, even for high school students (High school students! Spoiled kids. Gas-guzzling materialists!)
- Eating habits: pigging out on fast-food vs. spending (wasting?) the whole night at the dinner table.
- We show our belief in equality by moving to a first-name basis at the drop of a Matt (or a Pat); don't we know how to show respect?
- Is bathing every day really important? Or are we just self-indulgent?
- Household chores and work by teenagers in general: so, you've done your laundry and earned enough money for a new pair of Nikes, but who's got time for homework every night? Why don't we value education more?
- Dating customs: what goes here might get you into a mess there, and sometimes visa versa.

And this is just a start. There aren't many easy answers, but some good hard thought before making judgments can help a whole lot.





## The Values Majority Culture Americans Live By

<p><b>Personal Control over the Environment</b></p>	<p>People can/should control nature, their own environment and destiny; future is not left to fate. Result: Energetic, goal-oriented society.</p>
<p><b>Change/Mobility</b></p>	<p>Change is seen as positive, good, meaning progress, improvement and growth. Result: Transient society, geographically, economically and socially.</p>
<p><b>Time and Its control</b></p>	<p>Time is valuable--achievement of goals depends on productive use of time. Result: Efficiency and progress often at expense of interpersonal relationships.</p>
<p><b>Equality/Egalitarianism</b></p>	<p>People have equal opportunities; people are important as individuals, for who they are, not from which family they come. Result: Little deference shown or status acknowledged.</p>
<p><b>Individualism, Independence and Privacy</b></p>	<p>People are seen as separate individuals (not group members) with individual needs. People need time to be alone and to be themselves. Result: Americans seen as self-centered and sometimes isolated and lonely.</p>
<p><b>Self-Help</b></p>	<p>Americans take pride in own accomplishments, not in name. Result: Respect is given for achievements not accident of birth.</p>
<p><b>Competition and Free Enterprise</b></p>	<p>Americans believe competition brings out best in people and free enterprise produces most progress and success. Result: Less emphasis on cooperation than competition.</p>
<p><b>Future Orientation/Optimism</b></p>	<p>Americans believe that, regardless of past or present, the future will be better, happier. Result: Less value on past; constant looking ahead to tomorrow.</p>

## The Values Majority Culture Americans Live By--2

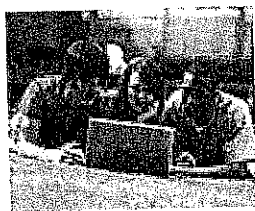
<p><b>Action and Work Orientation</b></p>	<p>Americans believe that work is morally right; that it is immoral to waste time.                  Result: more emphasis on "doing" rather than "being;" pragmatic, no-nonsense attitude toward life.</p>
<p><b>Informality</b></p>	<p>Americans believe that formality is "un-American" and a show of arrogance and superiority.                  Result: Casual, egalitarian attitude between people and in their relationships.</p>
<p><b>Directness, Openness, Honesty</b></p>	<p>One can only trust people who "look you in the eye," and "tell it like it is." Truth is function of reality not circumstance.                  Result: People tend to tell the "truth" and not worry about saving other person's "face" or "honor."</p>
<p><b>Practicality/Efficiency</b></p>	<p>Practicality is usually most important consideration when decisions are to be made.                  Result: Less emphasis on the subjective, aesthetic, emotional or on consensual decisions.</p>
<p><b>Materialism/Acquisitiveness</b></p>	<p>Material goods are seen as the just rewards of hard work--evidence of "God's favor."                  Result: Americans are seen as caring more for things than people or relationships.</p>

*Robert Kohls*

## Info to Know



Technology has enabled anyone and everyone to instantly publish their personal writings and other creative endeavors. If you have ever written a blog entry, posted a comment or reply on a website, uploaded a video to YouTube, posted a comment or picture to Facebook, or uploaded an audio podcast to a website, you've participated in personal publishing.



Online publishing allows for quick and easy feedback from friends, adults, or even experts from around the world. The benefits of this new ability create some risks that you should be aware of. Take some time to pause before you post, so you can enjoy responsible personal publishing in a safe and productive manner.

### Questions to ask before you post

- Who will be able to see what I post? Will anyone be embarrassed or hurt by it?
- What will my family or teachers say if they see what I post?
- How would I feel if the head of my dream job or school sees what I post?
- How would I feel if what I post is all over the news?
- Am I proud of what I'm posting?
- Do I have a clear conscience about what I'm posting?
- How would I feel if someone posted this about me?

### Personal publishing guidelines

- Assume that everyone will see what you publish.
- Consider how people might use what you publish against you to cause you harm.
- Do not publish inappropriate language or gestures. You don't want people to judge you negatively when they see your work.
- Do not publish something that you didn't create.

## Issues to Consider

### **Audience:**

Anything you publish could eventually be read and seen by anyone. Even though you may think that only certain people can access your posted content, you may be wrong because you do not have complete control over it once you write, print, send or post something. You never know who is looking over your friends' shoulders, or if those friends might take the content, spread it around online, or use it against you.

### **Anonymity:**

Using a pseudonym (fake name) can disguise your identity while developing your writing or artistic skills. Technology has made it much easier to appear to publish something anonymously because you can use a screen name, alias, or temporary email address. However, just about everything that is published can be traced back to a specific person since everything done online has what is called a "digital footprint." This footprint can enable authorities to discover where every piece of information on the Internet came from and who wrote/posted it.

### **Permanence:**

What you publish may be seen by others for many years to come. This can be a huge benefit, but it can also be problematic if you publish something inappropriate, embarrassing or hurtful to others. Think about how you would feel if your parents, future college admissions office or employer saw what you published.

### **Copyright:**

It is illegal to copy, use, or publish anything under your name that you did not personally create without getting permission from the author. If you are using someone else's words or pictures, you should give them credit by acknowledging what they wrote or said, or get permission from the person who originally took the picture. This is more than just common courtesy; it is also the law.

### **Free Speech:**

Publishing our thoughts or ideas is a form of speech that is often protected by the First Amendment. Having the right to free speech, however, doesn't mean that we can say whatever we want, whenever we want. You can't, for example, publish threats against someone else or ruin their reputation.

### **Consequences:**

Remember that you will be held responsible for any inappropriate or questionable content that you publish. Do not send or share any content that may call into question your integrity or may be misinterpreted as offensive or inappropriate. You could damage your reputation with your friends or be punished by your parents, and you may also get into trouble with the law.

Adapted from "A Student's Guide to Personal Publishing" by Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D. and Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D., who educate teens and adults about the safe and responsible use of the Internet and other communications technology. Visit [www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us) for more information.

As a leading printer of student-developed content, Jostens is committed to helping students develop journalism skills and understand the value as well as the responsibilities associated with publishing. Jostens is honored to present this expert advice to guide students and support educators and parents.



### You've got mail!

One of the ways students abroad try to reduce culture shock is to connect with home. These days it's relatively easy to stay in touch via email or phone. That's great news.

The not-so-great news is that it's almost too easy to connect with home. You're going abroad, after all, to explore a different way of life and to immerse yourself in another culture—to the extent possible.

Daily contact with people at home can actually hinder your adjustment process, keeping you attached to the familiar by a psychological "umbilical cord."

More than a few students have been known to spend three or four hours each day checking and writing e-mails from abroad, checking social networks like Facebook or skyping. Imagine how they could have otherwise used these hours to connect with their immediate surroundings.

Monitor your level of interaction with home. Obviously, you want to stay in touch, and you don't want anyone to worry about you, but you also want to plunge into your new life.

Think about how to achieve both connection and immersion.

When you have a few hours free, don't give in to the temptation to spend them at your host parent's computer or an internet café. Walk to a park or a cathedral, take a bus into the mountains or a part of the city you've never seen before, or go to a new café and strike up a conversation in German with someone there. There will be plenty of time to write email and watch movies when you're back home!

## Where to go for Help

Sexual abuse rarely occurs during a student's exchange program. However, we want our students to be as safe as possible and know their rights while they are in the United States.

If someone is doing something that makes you uncomfortable, tell them to stop. If they do not stop, you do not have to tolerate it.

Please tell an adult whom you trust that this is happening to you. You can tell a trusted teacher or counselor at your local high school, or your Nacel Open Door host parent, representative, coordinator, or student advisor.

You must inform Nacel Open Door if you are the victim of sexual harassment or abuse. Please inform your local representative, state coordinator, or national office of the situation.

**1-800-622-3553**

## Nacel Open Door Sexual Harassment Awareness

[nacelopendoor.org](http://nacelopendoor.org)

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## Sexual Harassment Awareness

### Your Rights to Your Body

Your body is private.

Trust your instinct.

You decide who can touch you.

You have the right to say NO.

Talk about issues and ask for help.

It's not your fault.

### What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual Harassment is unwanted sexual or romantic attention from an adult who knows or should know that such attention is not appropriate and/or not wanted. One of the difficult things to understand about sexual harassment is that it can be hard to define. Sometimes it may feel like a compliment. Other times it doesn't feel right to you and you feel uncomfortable or may not feel safe in that person's presence.

#### Unwanted Physical Contact

Being made to kiss someone.  
Touching private parts of the body.  
Being made to engage in sexual acts.

#### Visual Abuse

Being made to look at pornographic materials.

#### Verbal Abuse

Being called inappropriate names.  
Having someone make sexual statements to you.  
Having someone make remarks about your body.

#### Body Language

Being the object of inappropriate stares.  
Having someone make inappropriate gestures with their hands.

### Perpetrator Strategies

Often times perpetrators will threaten their victims. A perpetrator may tell an exchange student that they will be sent home if they do not perform an act, or if they tell anyone. An abuser may say that the abuse is the student's fault. In reality, being the victim of sexual harassment or abuse, is not the victim's fault, it is the perpetrator's. The perpetrator should know that their actions are not right.

Perpetrators have many different strategies:

Intensifying the relationship

Isolation

Seduction

Ignoring the Victim's Resistance

Keeping the Victim Silent

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**THIS INFORMATION IS VITAL TO YOUR SUCCESSFUL RETURN HOME. READ THESE PAGES THOROUGHLY AND NOTE ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE ATTENDING THE FINAL SEMINAR.**

## **GOING HOME AGAIN**

The cycle of overseas adjustment begins at the time you plan to study abroad. Many people feel that the adjustment ends when you have successfully assimilated into the life of the host country. In fact, the cycle of cultural adjustment continues through the return to the United States. Culture shock and re-entry shock (more commonly known as "reverse culture shock") are not isolated events but rather a part of the total adjustment process that stretches from pre-departure to reintegration at home.

### **CHANGES**

You have just had the opportunity to live, study and work overseas. During your stay you have probably assimilated some of the host country's culture, you have learned new ways of doing things, and perhaps gained some new views and opinions about certain topics. In short, you have changed. Having those changes occur outside the U.S. can magnify those experiences, thus causing the return home to be a bit unsettling. In addition, some of the experiences are specific to being overseas and could not have occurred in the United States.

People living overseas accumulate a set of special competences that help them adapt to new situations successfully. They learn to use the Paris Metro skillfully or how to tactfully interact (in a foreign language) with people of differing political views or simply how to be a good house guest. Mastery of these bits and pieces of knowledge makes life infinitely easier overseas, and contributes to an aura of distinctiveness. Many variations on the foregoing themes can be described, all of which contribute to make up a special consciousness in people who have lived abroad. Returnees leave a significant part of themselves behind when they give up a foreign way of life.

While overseas, you may have experienced a greater amount of independence than you previously experienced in the U.S. This independence can help make you more confident in your ability to achieve your goals. You may have gained a more mature or focused attitude about your future. Some of these new views and attitudes may be in conflict with the views and attitudes of family and friends. They may question your new way of thinking and doing things or even pressure you to "reform". These differences may be unsettling.

### **NEW SKILLS**

Along with the new ideas, views and attitudes that you have developed you have probably acquired some new skills. These may include discovering a new way to do an old task, a different perspective on your career, or increasing your foreign language skills. These new skills are now a part of your daily life. Increased facility with your foreign language will probably have one of the greatest impacts on you. If you have learned to become dependent on these skills to communicate from day to day, then it may feel strange for you to revert back to your native language. The degree of "strangeness" is directly connected to the amount of culture from the host country that you have assimilated and will definitely influence your readjustment. Patience, flexibility and time will be required just as it was at the beginning of your sojourn.

### **LOSS OF STATUS**

In your host country, you are seen as an informal ambassador from the United States. Your views, accent and lifestyle are all interesting to your hosts. This gives you a certain status of being "special". As such, you will receive a lot of attention, make friends and generally, be popular. When you return home, you are just like everyone else and the loss of feeling a bit "special" can be a factor that you must deal with in your readjustment.

### **FRIENDSHIPS**

Now that you have lived abroad, you obviously have a new circle of friends. You most likely see some or all of these people on a daily basis and they have probably become an important part of your life. Leaving your new friends can be the most difficult part of re-entry. Having to abandon intense friendships, girl/boyfriends, or cultural supports frequently brings disturbing feelings similar to those associated in a grieving process. Though most returnees seem to make good surface adjustment once home, that adjustment may cover many hidden feelings of uncertainty, alienation, anger and disappointment.



At first, friends back home will ask about your experiences and appear to be interested. They will often show a slight fascination for your adventures, but this may quickly fade. They whip through pictures and stories once, but because they have not shared the experience, you should be prepared for their quick loss of interest. After a while you may find that your friends are more eager to talk about what has gone on in their lives as opposed to hearing more about your life overseas. If your friends have never been abroad you may also have to deal with feelings of envy or jealousy. When you talk "too much" about your experience, people may accuse you of being elitist even though that may not be your intention. People are often threatened by new and unusual points of view if they themselves have not had a similar experience. As much as you need to talk about your time abroad, it is advisable to be sensitive to the attitudes and feelings of others.

As with your family relationships, your relationships with your friends can alter because of the changes that have occurred in your life and the lives of your friends. Former friends may even have made new friends and have priorities which are now different from yours. Be patient. If the friendship is worth maintaining, adjustment can and will be made. If not, developing new friendships can be as exhilarating as travelling.

## **FAMILY**

These changes - your new independence, new views and attitudes, your newly acquired skills and your new friends - all have contributed to making you who you are now. The "changed you" will have to readjust to life in the United States and for some this can be difficult. However, it can be a surprise to learn that you are not the only one affected by re-entry. You may think that, after all, you are the one who has been away and had so many new experiences. Everyone and everything at home should have stayed fairly stable. However, the home that you remember is not necessarily going to be the same as it was when you left. This feeling of "dislocation" occurs for two reasons. One, because you are now looking at what was once familiar through a new set of perceptions. Therefore, you will see everything a bit differently. Secondly, like it or not, life at home did carry on while you were away. Things have happened to your family and friends and events have occurred in their lives. These events may have caused changes in their feelings, perceptions, opinions and attitudes. Granted, these changes may not have as intensely affected your life. However, to the specific individuals their experiences are as important as your experiences are to you. Remember and be aware, that people at home change too, so expect things to be different.

Obviously, some changes (in yourself as well as others) will be quite subtle, while other changes will be immediately evident. How you and your family deal with the changes in one another will affect the readjustment phase for everyone. Remember the people at home are not expecting a changeling, someone who behaves differently and may have developed some especially unacceptable attitudes. While people in the host culture may have expected the sojourner to adjust and behave in a relatively appropriate manner, they were acutely aware that this person was foreign and could either be forgiven for strange behavior or, if the person became too difficult, ignored. People at home are not likely to be so tolerant and may exert a great deal of pressure on the returnee to conform. She or he is too important to be "lost" to foreign influence.

The role that your family and friends may want you to adopt is probably the role you "played" before going overseas. However, as you are not the same person as before, it is not possible for you to comfortably readopt that role. An attempt at an immediate reversion to "the old you" will likely fail. Often the role that you are expected to readopt is that of the "child". Parents who perceive their 18-20 year old as a child when the student leaves the United States for study abroad often are unprepared for the adult who returns.

It is normal for you to desire to hold onto the person who you have become. Your overseas experience and life will now be a part of you and reflect who you are right now. The "new" you cannot be discarded or forgotten for the "old" you. However, you and your family must come to terms with that "new" you and continue to build upon your existing relationship from this point forward. It will require commitment to work toward mutual respect and understanding of each other's views.

## **LEVELS OF INTENSITY**

As stated earlier, no experience is the same for everyone. Each person who goes through re-entry will experience a different level of intensity. The degree of shock experienced by each person may range from a mild jolt to an uncomfortable agitation. The level of intensity depends on a finite number of situations. Research on readjustment to home cultures suggests that there are several variables that may affect the degree of difficulty faced by individuals during re-entry. These factors and/or various combinations thereof will affect the level of intensity that you will experience.

### **Gender**

Female returnees may experience more difficulty upon returning home if the home environment is one with a patriarchal tradition. This does not assume that they preferred the host country environment, but that they will have to cope with more differences than men.

### **Age and academic level**

Older students or professionals who were well-established in their field before their sojourn sometimes experience a less troubled re-entry than younger students. Those who left home as teenagers, ready to discover new attitudes and explore new ways of living, may likely adopt "the host culture's way" than to selectively integrate it with their own cultural and personal beliefs. Once home they may constantly compare home country traditions and practices unfavorably with their host country experience, increasing the feelings of alienation.

### **Previous cross-cultural experiences**

Students who have previously been away from the United States have less trouble adjusting. A student who expects to experience some difficulties on return is better able to manage reacculturation problems.

### **Length of stay in the host culture and degree of interaction with the host culture**

The longer a student stays in the host country and the greater the degree of interaction and empathy with the host culture he or she experiences, the more difficult re-entry to the home culture environment may be.

### **Readiness to return home**

It has been hypothesized that students who strongly desire to return home at the end of their sojourn are most likely to return home with a high motivation to "resocialize", while those who strongly desire to stay on in the host country will seem "alienated" upon re-entry. Those who are moderately looking forward to returning home are expected to have the healthiest re-entry.

### **Degree of similarity between the home and host culture**

The greater the differences between the host culture and the home culture, the greater the reacculturation difficulty for the returnee. An Australian or British student returning home from the United States might expect an easier transition than a Thai or Saudi Arabian student. However, the less a returnee expects to experience reverse culture shock, the more likely it is that adjustment difficulties will cause alarm.

### **Changes in the home environment**

This variable can work in several ways. A returnee may expect everything to be the same at home as it was when he or she left. During the student's absence, there may have been subtle or dramatic changes in political, economic, environmental, or social factors on a national scale. Family relationships or the standard of living may have altered in ways not anticipated. Such unexpected changes may be stressful psychologically and may make it difficult for the student to realize his or her plans. Conversely, a student may return home to find nothing seems to have changed. This can intensify the student's feeling that there is no one who can understand what he or she is going through.

### **Job opportunities upon return**

Graduates who have difficulty finding an appropriate job, or any job, upon their return can be expected to experience more stressful re-entry than those who return to a past position, or to a promotion, or who are able to make a new start at an appropriate level. Sometimes, those returning to previously held positions feel they have outgrown them or that their contributions are not appreciated by superiors and colleagues. Others may find that their host country program of study did not prepare them to deal with real conditions and resources in the home environment.

### **Individual awareness**

The most aware individual is not immune to reverse culture shock or reacculturation bumps. But the returnee should be able to understand what is happening and why. Ideally, the student will be calm and capable of focusing on what he or she can do to ease the transition process, will look for ways to use the best of the host cultural experience, and will translate it so that family and colleagues can understand and share the benefits.

### **Availability of a support group**

Being able to share concerns and coping strategies with other recent and more established returnees can help reduce the panic, depression, frustration and sense of helplessness that can accompany re-entry. Students who return to places where few people have lived or studied abroad may feel very alone since there is no one with whom they can discuss their concerns. It helps to locate even one other person who has shared this experience and to see that one can successfully overcome reverse culture shock.

## LENGTH OF THE READJUSTMENT PERIOD

The length of time that the readjustment phase lasts will, of course, vary from person to person, but it will also depend on the level of intensity you experience. If you experience a very high level of intensity your adjustment will most likely take longer than if you experience a very low level of intensity. In addition, the length of time the readjustment lasts depends on you and how you cope with the situations that occur.

## COPING STRATEGIES

The good news is this phase of readjustment does not last forever! Here are some suggestions to make this phase a bit easier on you and your family and friends.

**First**, and foremost, acknowledge the re-entry phase as part of the overseas experience. Just as you had to give yourself time while going through the culture shock phase (if you did experience culture shock) so too, must you give yourself time to go through the re-entry phase. Acknowledging that reverse culture adjustment is real will help you avoid feelings of guilt that might occur if you are feeling depressed or unhappy about being home. Do not blame yourself. Give yourself (and others) time to adjust.

**Secondly**, educate your family and friends about this phase of adjustment. Many people have never heard of reverse cultural adjustment and are not aware of its existence. If the people around you know a little about what you are experiencing, then hopefully they will be a bit more patient and understanding towards you and help you to readjust. If you have difficulty communicating your feelings then share this handout with your family and possibly your friends. Remind those around you that you cannot unlearn what you have learned, but that you need time to reintegrate those often conflicting components within yourself.

**Thirdly**, keep in contact through letters (or e-mail) with the friends you made in your host country. It will help you feel that what you experienced was real and not just one big dream. Some returnees have the feeling of never having been overseas after their return to the home country. Also, some of your friends (from the same program) returning to the U.S. will probably be experiencing similar adjustment problems. You are an obvious support system for each other as you each know how the other is feeling and what the other is missing.

**Fourth**, if possible seek out past exchange students who live nearby. They have already gone through re-entry and may be able to offer support and advice about how to cope. Other returnees often want to hear of overseas adventures because they have a multicultural and international perspective.

**Fifth**, seek out other "captive" audiences who would have a natural interest in your overseas experience. Part of readjusting is being able to tell your story and describe the experiences that you have lived through. Such audiences include cultural organizations, school groups or civic groups that have an interest in the part of the world where you lived and most important, prospective exchange candidates.

**Sixth**, now is the time for you to look towards your future. You have finished one phase of your life and are ready to move ahead. Think about your next challenge or goal. Begin to make plans for that goal and put those plans into action so that you will feel you are moving ahead and not regressing. Take the influence of your overseas experience and use it positively to help plan this next phase of your life.

## IN CONCLUSION

What we have discussed here are things which you may feel or experience to some degree or another. Do not panic however. Instead, try approaching the whole experience with a pioneering attitude. This pioneering attitude is a very important requisite that will make re-entry easier. You have seen how you must be adaptable to live abroad and now you know that you must be adaptable when returning home. Going home can be an adventure and you should try to think of the United States of America as if it were a foreign country. With that attitude you will hopefully be open to the changes that have occurred in your absence and able to cope objectively with any difficulties you may have. Consider your re-entry period not as a time of problems but a time of opportunities - a time to make the most of your whole exchange experience.