

# **Culture Shock**

**5<sup>th</sup> lecture**

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# Culture shock

“Culture shock” is defined as a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. It is often brought on by the anxiety of losing all familiar signs and symbols of social interaction.

These signs are ways in which we orient ourselves to different situations in life: when to shake hands, what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to waiters, how to make purchases, when to accept or refuse invitations, etc.

# Culture shock

These cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept.

That is why many international students relate they felt like a child again when coming to the U.S. When you enter a new culture, all of most of these familiar cues are removed. You will probably experience frustration and anxiety.

# The Six Stages of Culture Shock

Generally culture shock can be broken in to six different stages. Normally after arriving in a new country everyone experiences two low stages, stages 3 and 5, before reaching a comfortable level of adjustment.

Of course, individuals will experience different degrees of each step or may even skip steps or experience them in different orders. It depends greatly on the experience of the individual and their personality type.

# Anxiety

## Stage 1

Anxiety about leaving home and what you will find in a new country.

# Honeymoon Period

## Stage 2

“Honeymoon”: Everything is exciting and fascinating in your new surroundings. You are excited and elated with all the new and different experiences.

# Honeymoon Period

The term culture shock is a term that is often used to refer to the adjustment process that occurs when a student goes to live in a foreign country.

Upon arrival, the student feels happy and interested learning about the new country and language. This is called the honeymoon period.

# The first low symptoms

## Stage 3

The first low symptoms of Culture Shock begin to set in. You realize that everything is so different in the new culture and it is overwhelming to cope with language, housing, shopping, transportation, and social changes.

You may feel lonely, or exhausted from constantly processing and trying to understand all the new experiences.



# Initial Adjustment Stage

## Stage 4

Initial Adjustment Stage: You can now handle many basic interactions with no problem.

It is getting easier to maneuver on campus and around Rochester. You probably feel satisfaction with your accomplishments.

# Isolation

## Stage 5

This second low stage is generally the most severe stage of culture shock. You can typically feel a loss of self esteem when dealing with setbacks such as continuing language barriers. It is not as easy as you thought to adjust to your new surroundings.

You feel like a child sometimes. Your sense of loneliness and isolation intensifies as you have been away from home for some time. You don't feel like a part of your surroundings and feel more like an outsider. People are not friendly and you do not like the new culture. You are not what you were before, and may feel angry and resentful and see everything in a negative light.

# Adjustment Stage

## Stage 6

Your sense of well-being and humor begins to return as you establish comfortable routines and learn to understand the customs, foods, and characteristics of the new culture. You have made some friends, and are beginning to enjoy aspects of your new life.

You realize that the problems and negative aspect of the new country are not reserved for foreigners, but that even natives face many of the same problems. Your perspective becomes more balanced and well rounded as you have begun to see that there are more good things and bad things about your new life. Some things you may never like, but you accept it as part of life, the same as we accept both the positive and negative aspects of any relationship.