

## “Will I ever feel at home?” -- Experiencing Culture Shock

### What is Culture Shock?

Definition: persistent feelings of uneasiness, loneliness, and anxiety that occur when a person has shifted from one culture to a different one

### Who Gets Culture Shock?

Culture shock happens to anyone who spends a significant amount of time living and participating in another culture, no matter how much they know about the other culture in advance.

### What is Culture Anyway?

Anthropological definition: a way of looking at the world and making sense of it that is ingrained at a deep and tacit level in each of us; a set of premises about the right and proper way for the world to be organized

### What are the Stages of Culture Shock?

1. The honeymoon stage
2. The judgment stage
3. Transition stage
4. Acceptance stage
5. Repeat stages 2-4 as needed

### How Do I Know if I Have Culture Shock?

- emotional difficulties (depression, anger, irritability, hostility, loneliness)
  - preoccupation with health and cleanliness
  - feeling of being overwhelmed by even the smallest things
  - homesickness (longing for family, idealizing home country)
  - developing (negative) stereotypes
  - loss of identity (lack of confidence, feelings of being exploited or abused)
- \*\*\* *feelings of reduced competence as a cultural actor* \*\*\*

### How Can I Handle Culture Shock If I Get It?

#1 - it's all in the attitude... it helps to have

- a sense of humor
- open-mindedness and curiosity
- an ability to cope with failure
- flexibility and adaptability
- tolerance for difference and ambiguity
- positive outlook; optimism

#2 - take practical action... it helps to

- get plenty of exercise
- get in touch with the familiar: eat familiar food, call home, complain to like-minded international students, speak your native language
- get involved in activities: clubs, sports teams, community service, music groups, etc.
- make connections: make new friends, practice English as much and as often as you can

#3 - engage in cultural analysis...it helps if you

- practice cultural relativism
- remain objective — don't judge
- observe, interpret, and analyze in order to make sense of your cultural experience(s)