

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is a normal experience which often occurs when people move from one culture to another and are dealing with language differences, new societal rules and new physical surroundings. Culture shock often creates great anxiety and there are usually typical cycles which you may experience. Both the student and the host family may experience some culture shock as they adjust to each other.

Culture Shock Cycles

1. Pre-Arrival

Student – pre-departure excitement and anxiety as you look forward to a new adventure.

Host Family – excitement and anticipation of student’s arrival

2. Arrival – Honeymoon Stage

Student – emotionally excited and everything is new and positive

Host Family – working hard to make the student feel at home and excited about the student joining their household

3. Culture Shock

Student – newness of things is becoming stressful and everything is annoying and inconvenient. You make a lot of personal complaints and you may withdraw from the family.

Host Family – you are often hurt by the student’s criticism and withdrawal and react critically to the student.

4. Adjustment

Student – Communication is becoming easier which allows you to relax more and be more confident. You begin to process information more objectively and make less effort to change the host family and tend to be more flexible.

Host Family – As communication improves you also relax more and perhaps become more flexible.

Common Symptoms of Culture Shock

- Student - You may feel many symptoms including: headaches, depression, dissatisfaction, sadness, loneliness, preoccupation with health, aches, pains, allergies, insomnia, exhaustion, anger, irritability, resentment, idealizing your own country, lack of confidence, insecurity, homesickness, boredom, overeating, loss of appetite, insecure, critical of Canada's culture and home stay family particularly
- It is normal for you to bond with fellow students from your own country. This is important and can provide you with a great deal of support. If, however, you refuse to interact with the host family or other students, this could hinder the process of working through culture shock

Suggestions for Students

- Maintain your perspective by keeping an open mind and a sense of humour
- Read your host family guidelines to get a feeling for what is expected of you
- Communicate – tell people how you are feeling. Talk to your host family, new friends
- Keep active, exercise
- Be positive – be careful about only discussing your feelings with your fellow students who may also be in the same adjustment period you are in
- Speak English
- Open yourself to new people and new experiences
- Do not be too hard on yourself, try to relax and experience things calmly
- Do not be afraid to ask for help dealing with culture shock
- Speak with your teachers and/or CultureWorks office

Suggestions for Host Families

- Provide a clear set of guidelines
- Communicate – tell the students they are appreciated and their presence in your home is valued, deal with the issues before they become too big to deal with
- Encourage your students to speak English – tell them you do not mind grammatical errors and let them know you will help them improve
- Be positive and maintain a sense of humour. Remember, there are many cultural differences and while you are acting according to your cultural rules, so is your student, according to their cultural rules.



- Voice your concerns to CultureWorks office