

SESSION TITLE: Culture Shock

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TRAINING CURRICULUM

“Culture is like a current; you can either flow with it or fight against it.”

By Yonda Schwarz

1. Culture Shock Introduction

- Culture shock is a very real experience for people who move to another country.
- Experience some level of culture shock even if their decision to move was one well thought out.
- Culture shock isn't a clinical term or medical condition.

2. The Culture Shock Model: (taken from What's Culture Shock & How Do I Get Through It? By Diane Schmidt)

Step 1: The Honeymoon Stage

Like any new experience, there's a feeling of euphoria when you first arrive in a new country and you're in awe of the differences you see and experience. You feel excited, stimulated, enriched. During this stage, you still feel close to everything familiar back home.

Step 2: The Distress Stage

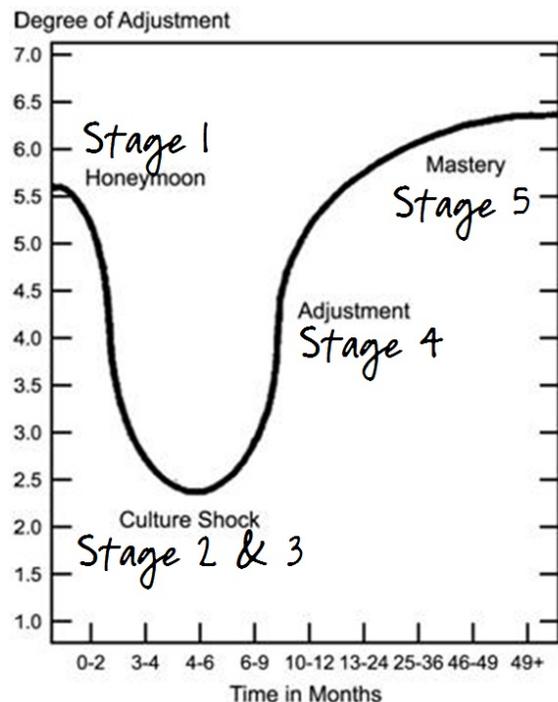
Everything you're experiencing no longer feels new; in fact, it's starting to feel like a thick wall that's preventing you from experiencing things. You feel confused, alone and realize that the familiar support systems are not easily accessible.

Step 3: Re-integration Stage

You're angry, frustrated and even feel hostile to those around you. You start to idealize life "back home" and compare your current culture to what is familiar. You dislike the culture, the language, the food. You reject it as inferior. Don't worry. This is absolutely normal. You're adjusting. Think back to when you started a new job or moved to a new house or a new city or when you moved in with someone. Any adjustment can cause you to look back in awe and wonder why you made the decision to move.

Step 4: Autonomy Stage

This is the first stage in acceptance. I like to think of it as the emergence stage when you start to rise above the clouds and finally begin to feel like yourself again. You start to accept the differences and feel more confident and better able to cope with any problems that may arise. You're able to look at the world around you and appreciate where you are.



Step 5: Independence Stage

You embrace the new culture and see everything in a new, yet realistic light. You feel comfortable, confident, able to make decisions based on your own preferences. You no longer feel alone and isolated. You appreciate both the differences and similarities of your new culture. You start to feel at home.

3. What is the Cause & Feelings of Culture Shock?

- We must understand what culture is: both our own culture and the new culture that we are in.
- Culture is made up of the common things that members of a community learn from family, friends, media, literature, and even strangers.
- These things influence how they look, act, and communicate.
- One's adjustment (experiences) may be different than another's.

Signs & Symptoms of Culture Shock:

sadness and loneliness,	headaches, pains, and allergies
insomnia or sleeping too much	feelings of anger, depression, vulnerability
idealizing your own culture	trying too hard to adapt by becoming obsessed with the new culture
the smallest problems seem overwhelming	feeling shy or insecure
overwhelming sense of homesickness	feeling lost or confused
questioning your decision to move	not wanting to be around people who are different from you
anxiety	trouble concentrating
feeling left out or misunderstood	developing negative and simplistic views of the new culture

4. Ways to Help Culture Shock

- Learning the Language
It's a good idea to become comfortable with the language as soon as you can. Not being able to understand what people are saying is almost as frustrating as not knowing how to make people understand what you are saying. Whatever method you choose; practice is really important.
- Knowing What to Expect
A lot of the anxiety that comes with moving to a new place has to do with not knowing what to expect in your new environment. Learning things about your new environment will help you become more comfortable.
- Help from Family & Friends, New Friends
You can do a lot to help yourself adjust to a new culture. But don't forget that you aren't alone — there are people you can go to who can help:

- **Maintaining Your Culture**

It's important to be yourself. Try not to force yourself to change too fast or to change too many things all at once. You will have your own pace of adjusting.

By Daniel & Christine Patterson

- **Celebrate Every Victory**

Remember always take time to celebrate the small victories. If that means learning a new word in foreign language, celebrate. If it is making contact with just one person, celebrate... In everything remember to celebrate and give thanks to God.” Missionary Roger Buckland.

We’re going to continue moving forward and “trust the process.”

You’re just growing!

- You’re like the lobster. They have to constantly change their shell so that they can grow.
- For a period of time they are exposed and vulnerable.
- In the uncomfortable situations, we’re just growing!
- Don’t get discouraged under the pressure but simply use it as motivation.

5. Importance of Positive Personal Qualities

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” Theodore Roosevelt

Recognizing the values that unite people:

- Story of Brazilian Student “Aline” in Romanian Language Class
- Story of Missionary Mark Shutes ministering in Romania Revivals
- Every child likes to have someone pay attention them.
- Every grieving mother needs someone to listen to them.
- Every man needs a leader in his life.
- Every person needs someone to pray for them.

If we ever start to feel sorry for ourselves, let us go to the children’s hospital.

“If you don’t have compassion in your heart for lost people, you have the worst kind of heart problem.” – E. Limones

It is a fact that people have the same basic human needs everywhere! People want to be accepted, respected, and loved; this is the same in every culture.

A culture will emphasize different ways of showing those positive qualities. Be mindful of the cultural emphasis. Study the cultural norms. Look for ways to be a better communicator in that culture. However, in all your learning “...put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians 3:14 NIV