

CULTURE SHOCK! cultural behaviour, is there right and wrong?

Throughout this evening it's VERY important that no-one is made to feel that their culture is wrong. Let's promote a positive and accepting attitude.

1. ICE-BREAKER (10-15 mins)

- Start the evening with the following ice-breaker.
- If you have a group larger than 20 then divide into discussion tables and use the following question ***'If you could spend a month in any country of your choice (all expenses paid) where would you go and why?'***
- If less than 20 – have everyone find a partner who is of a different nationality than themselves. Each person should share three things about their home culture with their partner- two should be positive and one not-so-positive. Give approx 10-15 minutes

2. QUESTIONNAIRE/QUIZ (20-30 mins)

- For this section use either:
- | | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| a) | Culture Check questionnaire |
| b) | Crossing Cultures sheet |
| c) | Cultural Awareness quiz |
| d) | Cultural Discussion questions |

2a. Culture Check

- Give each person one of the 'Culture Check' questionnaires and give just five minutes to read and tick statements that are relevant to their culture. **NOTE:** the language is not difficult but do be aware if anyone is struggling with any of the vocabulary.
- Spend time discussing people's responses - best to take this in the four sections rather than each question individually.

2b. Crossing Cultures

- Give each person one of the 'Crossing Cultures' sheets - explain that they should look at each value and mark along the dotted line where would best describe the general attitude within their own culture.
- Spend time discussing people's responses - don't worry if you don't have time to discuss every single value.

2c. Cultural Awareness Quiz

- Hand out a copy of the 'Cultural Awareness' quiz to each person. Give 5-10 mins for people to read through the statements and circle whether they think they're TRUE or FALSE. Be prepared to help with any new vocabulary.
- Read out the answers and have people mark their own papers.
- Have some discussion about how culturally aware your group is, in general.

2d. Cultural Discussion Questions

- In the envelope you'll find 12 cultural discussion questions with multiple choice answers.
- There is a lot of flexibility as to how you use these questions. If there are 8 people at your table you may wish to divide your group into two or three and divide the questions amongst them. Give them at least 15 minutes (maybe longer) before drawing everyone back together for some feedback.
- Each sub-group can feed back from at least one of their questions.
- Remember that this is partly about cultural differences so do mix your group up, even if this means getting people to change seats.

3. HOW ADAPTABLE ARE YOU? (10-15 mins)

If you are short on time this section can be drastically reduced or simply not used. Use the questions for discussion, but do not feel that you have to cover all of them:

1. *How many times have you moved home?*
2. *How many different countries have you traveled to? Did you enjoy the experience? How different have you found other cultures to your own?*
3. *What's the longest period of time that you've lived outside your own country?*
4. *Do you think you are open/adaptable to different ideas and different cultures?*
5. *How did you feel about the changes? What did you find most difficult?*

IMPORTANT: Please end this section with the final question: **What do you understand by the term 'CULTURE-SHOCK'?**

4. CULTURE SHOCK (20-30 mins)

- Show students the large paper with the headings for '5 Stages of Culture Shock' - ask them what they think the headings infer? What might be some of the characteristics/symptoms of each of these stages? Feel free to write on these papers.
- If you have six or more students, it's best to divide them into smaller groups of 2 or 3 for the above part.
- Enclosed are definitions of each of the stages - ample time should be left to show these to the students and allow any further discussion.

FINALLY ... be sure that students know we are here for them when they're going through difficult times and that we're open to their questions about culture – we will not be offended!!!

Also included in this theme is an article by UKCISA entitled '**What to do about Culture Shock**' ... this can either be photocopied or emailed to students.

CULTURE CHECK

What kinds of behaviour are acceptable in some cultures but not in others?

Tick () the statements about cultural behaviour that are true in your country.

Socialising

- 1. People often kiss friends on the cheek when they meet.
- 2. It's OK to drop by at someone's house without phoning first.
- 3. It's OK to ask people how much money they earn.
- 4. When friends are out for dinner together, each person pays his/her own share of the bill.

Out in Public

- 5. It's OK to blow your nose in public.
- 6. It's common to bargain when you buy things in a store.
- 7. If you want to smoke around other people, you should always ask if it's OK.

At Work & School

- 8. In an office, people usually prefer to be called by their first name.
- 9. Students always stand up when the teacher enters the classroom.

Dating & Marriage

- 10. Parents usually help decide who their children will marry.
- 11. Teenagers go out on 'dates' a lot.
- 12. Young people usually live with their parents after they get married.

Crossing Cultures

Think about your own culture and how it regards the following values. Mark a number in the central column to indicate the general attitude within your culture.

TIME Not the highest priority – tomorrow will do	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	TIME Greatly important - every second counts
FAMILY very important	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	FAMILY not so important
AUTHORITY it's a good thing	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	AUTHORITY hate it
ELDERS must be respected	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	ELDERS they usually interfere
PRIVACY not so important	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	PRIVACY highly valued - needed
PERSONAL SPACE quite small	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	PERSONAL SPACE large
INDIVIDUALISM group-minded	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	INDIVIDUALISM individualistic
STYLE OF COMMUNICATION direct – say what you think	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	STYLE OF COMMUNICATION indirect -
WOMEN inferior to men	5 4 3 2 1 / 1 2 3 4 5	WOMEN equal/better than men

Cultural Awareness Quiz

1. Japanese often send money to bereaved friends as an expression of sympathy. TRUE / FALSE
2. Shaking hands with women is acceptable in Indonesia.
TRUE / FALSE
3. The number 4 is considered lucky in Japan. TRUE / FALSE
4. Eating with the left hand is taboo in Saudi Arabia.
TRUE / FALSE
5. Brazilians usually wear black shoes in the office.
TRUE / FALSE
6. Japanese and Chinese people can read each other's newspapers?
TRUE / FALSE
7. Mexicans are supposed to keep their hands on the table during a meal.
TRUE / FALSE
8. In Britain you tip your plate away from you when eating soup.
TRUE / FALSE
9. Spanish people like to maintain eye contact during conversations.
TRUE / FALSE
10. Arabs expect gifts to be opened in front of the giver.
TRUE / FALSE
11. Japanese people, unlike the Chinese, do not mind 'losing face'.
TRUE / FALSE
12. Germans like deadlines.
TRUE / FALSE
13. British people drink more than 200 million cups of tea a day.
TRUE / FALSE
14. In Thailand a pale face is a sign of beauty in a woman.
TRUE / FALSE
15. The further south you go in Europe, the more authoritarian a boss is expected to be.
TRUE / FALSE
16. American businessmen dislike detailed written contracts.
TRUE / FALSE
17. In India holy men usually wear white.
TRUE / FALSE
18. The thumbs up sign means 'OK' in Argentina. TRUE / FALSE
19. The holy book of Islam is called 'The Torah'. TRUE / FALSE
20. In Mexico the attitude towards punctuality is very strict.
TRUE / FALSE

CULTURAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These are some scenarios to look at and discuss together. In a multi-cultural group it should bring out some key cultural differences. These should be discussed openly and without criticism.

You are taking part in a meeting with a number of people you don't know, but who appear to be from several different countries. There is a formal agenda, and when someone wants to speak, most of the participants wait for the chairperson to acknowledge them before they begin speaking. A few people simply speak out when they want to say something. Which of the following statements come closest to your interpretation of this behaviour?

- They are being rude.
- The chairperson should make them wait to be given permission to speak.
- They are acting normally.
- The chairperson is being overly authoritarian and should stop trying to control the discussion.
- They don't know the rules.
- The chairperson should explain what constitutes good behavior in meetings s/he chairs.
- They ought to know better.
- The chairperson should ask everyone present what rules they want to follow during the meeting.

You are working with several other students to write a report for university. You have prepared a rough draft and asked another student to comment on it. When they return it to you, you see that it's been marked using red ink. At the bottom of the page, she has written a comment: "*You have mentioned several of the most important points, but you need to organize it better.*" You are...

- pleased that they took the time to write a comment.
- horrified that they used red ink.
- embarrassed at all the attention they have given your work.
- hurt and angry that they have been so critical.

You have an 8 p.m. dinner invitation at someone's house. You want to make a good impression. What time should you plan to be there?

- more than half an hour before the time stated.
- about 7:30 p.m.
- about 7:45 p.m.
- exactly 8:00 p.m.
- around 8:15 p.m.
- around 8:30 p.m.
- it's flexible, so more than half an hour after the time given if acceptable

When you are introduced to someone new, do you...

- smile and say, "Pleased to meet you."
- shake hands.
- fold your hands and bow slightly.

How do work colleagues greet each other in your country?

- Rub noses?
- Bow slightly?
- Shake hands? What constitutes a "good" handshake?
- Kiss each other on the cheek? Two kisses, one on each cheek? Three kisses, alternating cheeks?
- Simply say hello and smile?
- High fives?
- Another form of greeting? What?

When you are talking with an acquaintance or a colleague, do you...

- look the person directly in the eyes.
- look down at your feet.
- look off into the air beside the person you are talking to.
- look briefly into the person's eyes, then let your eyes wander around the person's face.

When you shake hands with someone, do you...

- grasp the other person's hand firmly and pump it up and down?
- brush the other person's palm lightly with your fingertips?
- grasp the other person's hand firmly with your right hand and grab his/her elbow with your left hand?
- offer your hand, but do not actively return the other person's grasp?
- kiss the back of her hand while looking into her eyes?
- kiss the inside of her wrist while looking into her eyes?

When you shake hands with someone and that person does not grasp your hand firmly in return, what does that tell you about that person?

- The person is very polite.
- The person has a weak character.
- The person has a strong character.
- The person is not to be trusted.
- The person can be trusted.
- The person doesn't like you.
- The person likes you.
- The person is trying to show you s/he is not aggressive.
- The person has something wrong with his/her hand.
- The person is very aggressive.

To show you are paying attention and listening with interest, do you...

- nod or shake your head?
- make some kind of sound: grunt, say "mmm...", "uh-huh," or "huh-uh"?
- listen quietly without interrupting or gesturing?
- jump in while the other person is speaking and ask questions?
- try to finish the other person's sentences for him/her?

When you shake hands with someone and that person grasps your hand firmly and looks you straight in the eye, what does that tell you about that person?

- The person is very polite.
- The person has a weak character.
- The person has a strong character.
- The person is not to be trusted.
- The person can be trusted.
- The person doesn't like you.
- The person likes you.
- The person is trying to impress you with his/her strength.
- The person has something wrong with his/her hand.
- The person is very aggressive.

You and several of your friends are out shopping together. When you are ready to pay, do you...

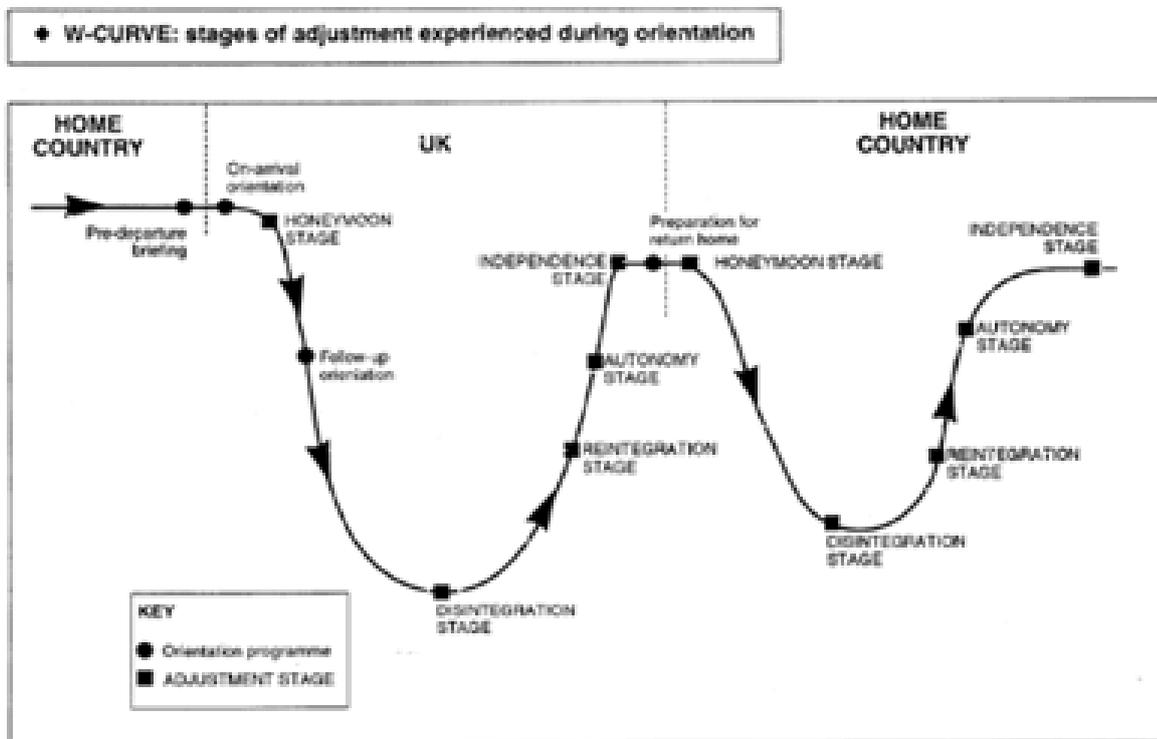
- delegate one person to stand in line at the check-out stand and save places for the rest of the group?
- each wait in line separately to pay?
- crowd around the check-out counter and expect a competent cashier to know whose turn it is?

You are being helped by a sales clerk. When a new customer walks in, the sales clerk leaves you momentarily and turns her attention to the newly arrived customer. Do you consider this...

- normal behaviour?
- rude behavior?
- a personal insult?
- the result of bad training?
- the result of good training?
- the result of a lack of training?

5 STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

1. The Honeymoon (or Tourist) stage
2. Shock!
3. The Adjustment stage
4. Acceptance (or Acculturation)
5. Re-Entry shock



Adapted from "Orientated for Success", edited by M. Barker, Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, 1990.

The Honeymoon (or Tourist) Stage

Everything is new and exciting. You might think the new culture is wonderful. Even if you experience problems you recover quickly because you're having fun. Everything is quite positive and you find the people in this new culture very nice. This stage can last anything from a few weeks to a few months - or maybe just a couple of days! It is called the tourist stage because generally tourists don't stay in a place long enough to have culture shock.

Shock

In this stage, all the little problems and frustrations appear much bigger! Maybe you don't feel safe & secure and you're afraid of being robbed. Maybe you find the level of cleanliness in the new culture very different from your own culture. You can feel very confused and lonely. During this stage, if you find others from your home culture you can feel quite dependent on them. You may find that it all too easy to stereotype people in this new culture. You miss your own family, friends and culture very much. If it were possible, you might just pack your bags and get on the first plane home!

The Adjustment Stage

If you gave up at the last stage you won't get to this point. If you decide to stay, eventually you will learn to deal with the differences. You will learn the language better and make some new friends. You will still have the occasional crisis, but your attitude is positive enough to overcome. Maybe you can even laugh at the difficulties. This period of adjustment can be slow, and some people will go back into the shock stage for a period of time.

Acceptance or Acculturation

You can now live in this new culture. You have gone through a lot of personal changes and growth and you feel confident enough to deal with any difficulties that arise. You have developed a bicultural identity.

Re-entry Shock

This is the shock of coming back home, especially if you have spent a substantial amount of time in another culture. The problem is often that you have changed a lot in ways that people back home haven't. You have experienced things that they haven't. This can often lead to misunderstandings. Sometimes you feel like a stranger in your own culture.

What to do about Culture Shock

Some of the effects of culture shock

Some of the symptoms of culture shock can be worrying themselves. For example, you may find your health is affected and you may get headaches or stomach aches or you may start worrying about your health more than previously. You may find it difficult to concentrate and as a result find it harder to focus on your course work. Other people find they become more irritable or tearful and generally their emotions seem more changeable. All of these effects can in themselves increase your anxiety.

How to help yourself

Though culture shock is normally a temporary phase, it is important to know there are things you can do to help so that some of these worrying effects can be minimised. Don't feel "this isn't going to happen to me". Culture shock can hit you whatever culture you come from and however experienced or well-travelled you are.

- Simply understanding that this is a normal experience may in itself be helpful.
- Keep in touch with home. There are several ways you may be able to do this: for example telephone, letter, fax, email. Several telephone companies offer greatly reduced charges for international calls. Check your Student Services, Students' Union or International Office for information. If you live close enough to travel home at weekends, it is a good idea not to go home too often as this will make settling more difficult. Once or twice a term is probably best. Newspapers and satellite TV will also be an option for some people, again, see what is available for international students in your college or university.
- Have familiar things around you that have personal meaning, such as photographs or ornaments.
- Find a supplier of familiar food if you can. Your student adviser or a student society may be able to help. Eat a healthy and balanced diet.
- Take regular exercise. As well as being good for your health it can be a way of meeting people.
- Make friends with international students, whether from your own culture or from others, as they will understand what you're feeling and, if possible, make friends with the local students so you can learn more about each other's culture. Be prepared to take the first step and find activities which will give you a common interest with UK students e.g. sports, music or volunteering.
- Take advantage of all the help that is offered by your institution. In particular, the orientation programme offered by most colleges and universities can be a valuable way of meeting people and finding out about things that can help you.
- Use the university or college services, where there will be professional and experienced staff. For example the health service, the counselling service, the International Office or hall wardens will provide a friendly, listening ear. Even if at home you wouldn't consider such steps, in the UK it is quite normal and they may help when your familiar helpers are missing. If you are finding settling down difficult, your personal tutor probably also

needs to know. She or he may be able to help, particularly with adjusting to a different academic system.

- For some students linking with a faith community will put you in touch with a familiar setting, whether it is a church, mosque, synagogue or temple. Many universities have a chaplaincy in which several faiths may be represented. There may also be religious student societies. Many chaplaincies welcome students of all faiths for pastoral or social activities.
- Investigate the Students' Union and its societies. There may be an opportunity to learn a new sport or activity or continue an interest from home. A further advantage is that these societies bring together students from different courses and countries with a shared interest. There are often national societies that will celebrate significant occasions such as Chinese New Year or Thanksgiving. For UK students, student societies can be one of the many ways of making new friends.
- Above all find someone to talk to who will listen uncritically and with understanding, rather than isolating yourself.

Finally...

It is important to stress that culture shock is entirely normal, usually unavoidable and not a sign that you have made a mistake or that you won't manage. In fact there are very positive aspects of culture shock. The experience can be a significant learning experience, making you more aware of aspects of your own culture as well as the new culture you have entered. It will give you valuable skills that will serve you in many ways now and in the future and which will be part of the benefit of an international education.

Taken from www.ukcisa.org.uk