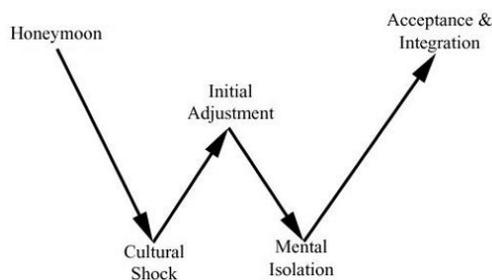


What is Culture Shock?

From Canada World Youth 'A Guide for Parents: 6 Week Youth Leaders in Action program" March 2013. Page 8
http://canadaworldyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/parents_guide_2013-2014_shortYLA_EN.pdf



'Culture shock' is used to describe the emotional rollercoaster that someone experiences when finding themselves in a new community within Canada or overseas. It is normal for the volunteers to experience some form of culture shock during their program. The symptoms of culture shock vary but can include:

- a feeling of sadness and loneliness
- an over concern about ones health
- headaches, pains, and allergies
- insomnia or sleeping too much
- feelings of anger, depression, vulnerability
- idealizing ones own culture
- trying too hard to adapt by becoming obsessed with the new culture
- the smallest problems seem overwhelming
- feeling shy or insecure
- become obsessed with cleanliness
- overwhelming sense of homesickness
- feeling lost or confused
- questioning one's decision to join the program

You will go through a form of culture shock during your adaptation process. This process can usually be divided in four phases.

Phase 1 The honeymoon: everything is great, people are excited, have energy and love everything and everyone in the program.

Phase 2 The storm: suddenly the honeymoon is over and reality sets in. At this point most participants are experiencing some of the symptoms of culture shock, at varying degrees. There are some things that annoy them about the program its rules and some behaviours and personality traits that they may not like about their host family, counterpart, school, etc

Phase 3 Normalizing: Once participants begin to accept and adapt to their new situation and environments they enter the third phase. They have adapted and sought solutions to their challenges. They now understand what the expectations are and are starting to meet those expectations.

Phase 4 Performance: At this stage, participants are starting to feel comfortable with their surroundings and they begin performing. They find new energy and new projects. They reach for new heights within the experience and put all of their energy into making the most of this amazing opportunity!

****Note: Each individual may hit these stages at different points and some may not ever reach the performing stage!*

If you decide to help, then do it with H.E.A.R.T.

Source: "Mental Health and Wellness Abroad" Counselling Center, University of South Florida

Hear

- Stop what you're doing and really listen to what the student is saying.
- Reflect back what the person is saying and try using their own words.
- Validate their experience and avoid the temptation to problem solve.

Empathize

- Acknowledge what you have heard and let the student know you understand.
- Express concern and interest.
- Avoid criticizing or sounding judgmental.
- Remember, even if the problem does not seem real to you, it may be very important to the student.

Assess

- Ask the student, "What have you thought about doing?"
- Discuss the pros and cons of different courses of action.
- Don't expect to have all the answers.

Refer

- Be honest about your concerns and limitations.
- The student may need professional help.
- Do not agree to be secretive about his or her problem.
- Help the student find appropriate resources.
- Offer to go with him or her to talk with a professional.

Tell

- Do not ignore comments about suicide, violence, or harm to others.
- Seek professional assistance.

