

The 4 Stages of Culture Shock

Culture shock. You're lost, standing confused in a new place, unable to tell left from right, up from down, phone booths from trash cans or **con-artists** from friends. But this image of **sudden** shock isn't quite right.

In reality, culture shock is a **phenomenon** that can take months to develop.

Culture shock tends to move through four different **phases**: *wonder, frustration, depression and acceptance*.

1. **Wonder**. This phase, also known as the "Honeymoon Phase," is usually the first phase experienced. It's often very positive. You're **fascinated** with the language, the people and the food. The trip seems like the greatest thing you've ever done. It's an adventure and you enjoy every thing!

2. **Frustration**. This is a difficult stage of culture shock, familiar to anyone who has lived abroad or traveled for a long time. You don't understand **gestures**. You get laughed at or you **offend** a little old lady without knowing why. You feel angry often and miss your own culture.

3. **Depression**. This is the worst stage of culture shock. You are homesick and sad all of the time. It's hard to be so far away, **especially** if you're all by yourself. It feels like nothing will ever be OK again until you get on that plane home.

4. **Acceptance**. After weeks and months of **struggling** through a thousand different emotions, acceptance finally arrives *like a warm bath at the end of a hard day*. Acceptance does not mean total understanding – it's almost impossible to ever completely understand another culture – but involves the **realization** that you don't have to "*get*" it all. You find what makes you happy and **content** in your new **surroundings**.

1) Vocabulary

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| 1. Con-artist - | a. extremely interested by something or someone |
| 2. Sudden - | b. to accept a situation which cannot be changed |
| 3. Phenomenon - | c. a stage or a number of changes that will occur |
| 4. Phase - | d. a feeling of sadness that makes you think there is no hope |
| 5. Wonder - | e. someone who tricks people in order to get money from them |
| 6. Fascinated - | f. fighting to win when you are losing |
| 7. Frustration - | g. happening quickly |
| 8. Gesture - | h. more importantly, in particular |
| 9. Offend - | i. something that is unusual or difficult to understand/explain |
| 10. Depression - | j. moving a part of your body to show meaning or feeling |
| 11. Especially - | k. understanding something that you had not understood before |
| 12. Acceptance - | l. a feeling of amazement for something new to you |
| 13. Struggle - | m. happy and satisfied |
| 14. Realization - | n. to make someone angry by doing or saying something rude |
| 15. Content - | o. the objects, buildings, nature, etc.. around a person |
| 16. Surroundings - | p. a feeling of being upset because you can't control something |

2) Questions

1. What is this article about?
2. How many stages of culture shock are there? Describe each stage in your own words.
3. Have you or someone you know ever experienced any of these stages of culture shock? Talk about it.
4. How would you help a friend or family member who was experiencing culture shock? What would you say or do to make him/her feel better?

3) Storytelling: "It wasn't what I *expected!*" - Sometimes when you travel you are disappointed-something doesn't go as planned or it wasn't very exciting.

Think about a time when you had big expectations, but were *let down*.

EXAMPLE: I went to Paris when I was 16. I was expecting to have a life changing experience. I was excited to see European culture and famous architecture. But it was a big let down! I didn't enjoy Paris at all! I had to wait in long lines to see the sights or I wasn't able to see them because there were so many tourists. Everything was very expensive and the food wasn't that great. My hotel was in a bad neighborhood and was far away from the interesting places. It wasn't what I expected!

You may write your ideas here:

4) Class Discussion – Stereotypes are beliefs or ideas that people have about different cultures or groups. There are good and bad stereotypes about every culture. Sometimes they are true, but usually stereotypes are untrue and unfair.

Stereotypes can sound harsh, mean, or offensive in English.

EXAMPLE:

“All Americans are fat.” This sounds rude, soften your language...

“I’ve heard that many Americans are overweight.” This sounds better.

I’ve heard that(some/many)____. I was told that(some/many) _____. I read that(some/many)_____.

I don't know if it's true, but I heard that_____.

Try it: “Foreigners hate spicy food.” “Americans are lazy.” “Canadians are friendly.”

5) Group Discussion – Discuss stereotypes about countries and cultures with your group.

Ask: “What sort of stereotypes have you heard about_____?” “Do you think it's true?/Do you agree?”

a. the USA/Americans _____

b. the UK/British _____

c. Japan/Japanese _____

d. Korea/Koreans _____

e. South Africa/South Africans _____

Where do you get these stereotypes from? TV? Movies? Books? ___?

Have you ever traveled to these countries or met people from these countries?