

# Culture Shock

## Emotional Signs . . . . . Behavioral Signs

### **Alienation**

- No friends
- "Self-imposed" isolation
- Limited intercultural skill development

### **Anger, Frustration, Irritability**

- Acting out (physical, verbal)
- Excessive drinking
- Ethnocentrism
- Defensiveness
- Complaining about the host culture/people

### **Anomie, Loneliness**

- Isolation
- Withdrawal (social, academic)
- Discontinues pleasurable activities
- Writing or calling home a lot

### **Anxiety**

- Nervousness
- Tension (muscles, "nerves")
- Insomnia
- Poor concentration
- Fear of being misunderstood

### **Apathy**

- Regressive behaviors
- Social and academic withdrawal
- Lack of care for self/others
- Poor personal hygiene

### **Confusion**

- Judgmental
- Stereotyping
- Communication problems
- Poor decision making
- Questioning Self (identity, role, purpose)

### **Depression**

- Insomnia
- Substance abuse
- Weight change
- Appetite change
- Social/Academic withdrawal
- Emotional swings
- Irritability/Anger
- Decline in self-care

### **Obsessions**

- Injury
- Inadequacies
- Not being understood
- Threat/harm/persecution
- Contamination

### **Compulsions**

- Compensation
- Acting out behaviors
- Withdrawal, defensive
- No appropriate risk taking
- Hand-washing, clothes
- Avoidance behaviors

# Homesickness

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Homesickness is one of the most common adjustment problems related to culture shock and loneliness. Experienced by students from every country, homesickness is a universal side-affect to being away from home. Psychologists often refer to homesickness as "separation anxiety" because students — in particular those moving away from home — feel separated from all that is familiar.

Feelings of homesickness may even start before your leave to study abroad and you may find yourself mildly depressed or anxious several weeks before leaving. The anticipation and preparation for this major change of lifestyle can trigger pre-departure homesickness, or sudden feelings that you don't want to leave, or even a want to back out of your decision to study abroad.

Some students might experience homesickness with the first few days or weeks of being abroad, while others might not be hit by homesickness until later on, or closer to the holidays. Holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries, family events or even family illness or death can all cause you to feel homesick, or make you wish you were at home. Also, many students report increased feelings of homesickness during the winter months when darkness, rainy weather and the cold can lead to feelings of depression.

The following are a few tips to help you cope with feelings of homesickness:

Don't wait for homesickness to go away by itself. Confront your feelings by talking to someone (a counselor, family member, roommate, or another student, etc.) about your homesickness. Chances are that the other students in your program may be feeling the same way you are.

Bring some of home along with you to your country abroad. Be sure to pack photos of family and friends, bring your favorite CDs and cook family recipes while abroad.

Make friends with locals and invite them to spend time with you. Creating such a support network can really help to alleviate homesickness while creating lasting friendships.

Be patient with yourself as you adjust to the unexpected realities of being in another country, and how abroad is not like home.

Get involved by seeking out opportunities that keep you busy and occupied so that you won't think about home. Try to work, intern, volunteer, or travel. You could also join a sports team or club, join a gym, or participate in program activities.