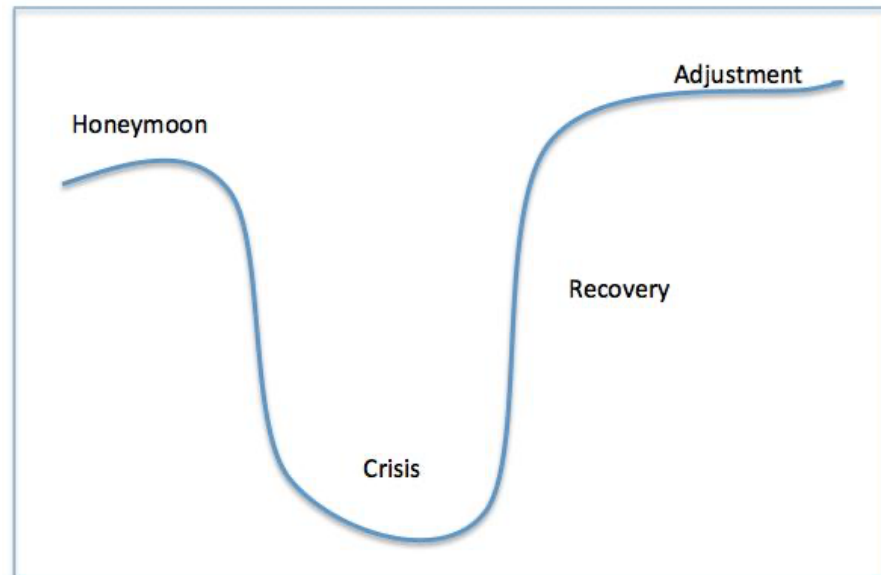


## Cultural Adaptation

Adapting to a new environment takes time, and the pace of transition varies from person to person. The typical pattern of cultural adjustment often consists of distinct phases:

Honeymoon, Crisis, Recovery, and Adjustment. Note that this cycle is

repeated upon re-entry to one's home country or culture of origin.



### The Honeymoon Phase

This phase is best described by feelings of excitement, optimism and wonder often experienced when one enters a new environment or culture. Students are likely to focus on the positive aspects and pleasing differences of the new environment.

### The Crisis Phase

The Crisis Phase is also called "culture shock." In general, culture shock describes the anxiety and feelings of surprise, disorientation, or confusion one feels when operating in an entirely different cultural or social environment. It grows out of the difficulties in assimilating to the new culture, causing difficulty in knowing or going along with what is appropriate and what is not. Often this is combined with strong moral and aesthetic disgust with certain aspects of the new culture. Culture shock does not necessarily occur suddenly but may gradually affect a person's mood over time. The length of time a person experiences culture shock depends on their level of self-awareness and the length of time they stay in a culture.

## Process of Cultural Adjustment

<https://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/living/cultural>

### Symptoms of Culture Shock

Culture shock manifests itself in different forms, but some symptoms can be:

- changes in eating habits and sleeping habits
- acute homesickness; calling home much more often than usual
- feeling hostile; complaining frequently about the host country/culture
- irritability, sadness, depression
- frequent frustration; being easily angered
- self-doubts; sense of failure
- recurrent illness
- withdrawing from friends or activities

## The Recovery & Adjustment Phases

Recovering from culture shock is handled differently by everyone; we each have our unique circumstances, backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses that need to be taken into consideration. With time and patience, we can experience the positive effects of cultural adjustment such as increased self-confidence, improved self-motivation and heightened cultural sensitivity. As you gradually begin to feel more comfortable in your new environment, you will feel more like expanding your social networks and exploring new ideas. You will feel increasingly flexible and objective about your experience, learning to accept and perhaps even practice parts of the new culture while also holding onto your own cultural traditions.

### Suggestions for easing the transition:

- **Realize that what you are going through is normal.** Remember that the unpleasant feelings are temporary, natural and common to any transition that a person makes during their life. Be patient and give yourself time to work through the process.
- **Keep in touch with your home country.** Read newspapers from home, international magazines, etc. Watch international television channels or surf the internet. Call home regularly. Have familiar things around you that have personal meaning, such as photographs or ornaments. Find a supplier of familiar foods or visit restaurants that are similar to your home cuisine.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep!

## Process of Cultural Adjustment

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- **Talk to someone.** Find friends who are going through a similar process, call your family back home, or see a counselor. Reach out to Student Services (Dean McFarlin's office). University Counseling Services has trained counselors. In the U.S. it is very common to talk with a counselor about problems or difficulties. Take advantage of the resources available to you at the university.
- **Have fun and relax!** Become a member of the I-House. Join student groups. Get out of your room and volunteer to help others. Take up a new sport. Participate in activities, clubs and student organizations of interest to you.
- **Improve your English skills.** Cultural adaptation is greatly enhanced by perfecting your English skills. Not being able to clearly communicate can create isolation and loneliness. Make a point to join activities that give you the opportunity to share in conversation and express your identity.