

STAGES OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION

1. Fascination/Exploration: Characterized by hyper-activity, and eagerness for the new and unfamiliar. We ask lots of questions, hardly waiting for the answer. We go on trips, hikes and tours. We take pictures; we are tourists. Everything is interesting, exciting, and fun, even the "hardships" such as unfamiliar sights, food and climate. We depend upon our "guides" and are quick to take suggestions for new activities. We talk and talk, sharing our experiences with anyone who will listen; it is difficult to concentrate on anything even slightly academic or structured. Our letter-writing is either a jumble of observations and accounts of the new environment, or we are too busy to bother. The more bizarre and odd the setting the more we like it. We tend to view local people as objects -- inhabitants, rather than as individual human beings.
2. Frustration/Withdrawal: Characterized by moodiness and shortening of temper. We begin to see the seamy of the new environment, its limitations and shortcomings. We feel "out of place" and awkward; those around us seem insensitive to our distress. The quaint now appears to be ridiculous; the unfamiliar, alien. We find the curious and unexpected reactions of local people to be annoying and suspect in intent. The weather and the food take their toll and add to our discontent. Our letters have become morose and full of doubt. "Why did we ever decide to come here?" "I don't belong here." "Helpful" advice from those who have lived here for some time is more irritating than helpful. "They make it all sound so easy to accept the conditions. We complain, loudly, at the slightest inconvenience or change of plans. Schedules and timetables become all-important mainstays of our eroding sense of security and self-confidence. We withdraw, stay in our rooms, read, or we seek out fellow-sufferers who concur with our reactions and help us find justification for them. We tend to avoid local people especially in situations where we are outnumbered.
3. Re-emergence/Experimentation: Characterized by cautious trial-and-error experiencing. We take advantage of whoever offers us advice, listening with interest to others' accounts of their experiences. We ask questions and listen to the answers; we make thoughtful comments regarding our own experiences. We observe carefully and thus tend to notice more. We begin to perceive the internal consistency of the local procedures and behavior, and though it remains foreign and