

Topic: Cultural Adjustment
(International Catholic Migration Commission, Turkey)

Activity: Culture Shock

Objective	Participants will be able to identify the stages of culture shock in the story to the extent that they can list ways of coping with each one of the stages.
Lesson Time	30 minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The Story of Newcomers” divided into four parts (see sample below)• Flipchart paper or board• Markers• Diagram (explained in Practice #1; sample below)
Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Draw a diagram, where the horizontal line represents time. Mark the line with four time points, representing the time before going to the U.S., the time after arrival, 1½ years after arrival, and five years after arrival. Now draw a vertical line. This line represents the emotional stages of a refugee during the time periods. The scale ranges from desperation to euphoria. See sample below.2. Ask one participant to read the first part of the story aloud and instruct the others to listen carefully.3. After the first part is read, ask participants to measure on the scale the character’s emotional state before going to the United States. Draw a horizontal line from there, and the vertical one from the point “before going to the U.S.” on the timeline. Mark the point where these two lines meet.4. Repeat the same procedure for the three remaining parts of the story.5. At the end, connect all the given (four) points with a line in order to make graphic representation of culture shock.6. Discuss the meaning of culture shock, its reflection on everyday life, and different coping skills with participants.
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use numbers instead of the faces shown on the graph below.

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The Story of Newcomers

Part I: Before Going to the United States

I like watching American sitcoms and other TV shows such as Santa Barbara, ER and Friends. My husband and I often watch American movies in the evening, and our children love listening to American music. I think I know a lot about Americans and their way of life. For me America is the land of possibilities. My husband and I have decided to move there in order to secure a better future for our children. I know it is possible to achieve this in the States. My friends, who moved to the States a year and a half ago, tell me that they are doing great. They have already bought a house. Everybody agrees that it is easy to succeed in the States if you are hardworking and persistent. The only thing I am a little worried about is the language. But I am optimistic about it. I am sure my husband and I will quickly learn enough English to be able to communicate. I can't wait to finally get there where nobody will ever ask us where we are coming from or what our religion is.

Part II: We Arrive in the States

Upon arriving in the States, we have found ourselves living in a building inhabited by foreigners who have arrived from different parts of the world, bringing their own cultures with them. Some of them are refugees like us, and the others have been living in the States for a longer period of time. It turns out that the words I learned by watching American sitcoms are not very useful. I have had difficulties communicating even on a basic level, like asking for directions. Our lifestyles have changed dramatically. I have to organize and plan every minute. In the morning my husband and I go to work and our children go to school. Right after work I attend ESL classes. When I get home from the classes, I prepare lunch (which is actually dinner, since it is already dark outside). After dinner my husband attends ESL, while I stay at home with our children. I usually clean up and arrange everything for the next day. I spend my days working and learning the language. My husband and I rarely see each other. We don't have time for conversations and I feel like we're slowly becoming estranged, which worries me a lot. I am shocked by the American way of life. They don't rest during the day, nor do they socialize. All they care about is money. I feel terribly lonely. I haven't made any American friends at work because I don't speak English well enough. My kids are also unhappy because they don't have any friends and they can't play freely in the street as they used to at home. My thoughts often wander back to our hometown. I remember happy times with our friends and neighbors, as well as familiar places and streets. I remember that in one of the letters to my parents I wrote the following: "At home you can see life passing by, you can see people walking, shopping and spending time together. Here, in America, I do not see anything else but cars. It makes me feel so sad when it is raining and I cannot see a single umbrella in the street. When I go out, it is a rare chance I will meet someone."

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Part III: 1½ Years After We Arrived

I have managed to find a new, well-paid job, and we moved into a new apartment. My husband and I have improved our knowledge of English and that makes us feel more confident in every situation. I have made some friends and we meet several times a week. We are considering enrolling in an aerobics class. My older son started playing basketball twice a week and my husband attends a computer course every Saturday where he meets new friends. My younger son has a lot of friends at school and they visit him daily. Every afternoon they play in our new apartment because there is enough room now. I think Americans are very spontaneous and friendly people. Sometimes their behavior or comments confuse me. They are so different from us. At work I am surprised at the amount of effort Americans invest in their careers. They often point out their skills and capabilities unlike me. I would rather wait until others notice me than brag myself. Life in the States seems like a football game: The better team will go further, while the others always remain in the second league.

Part IV: 5 Years After We Arrived

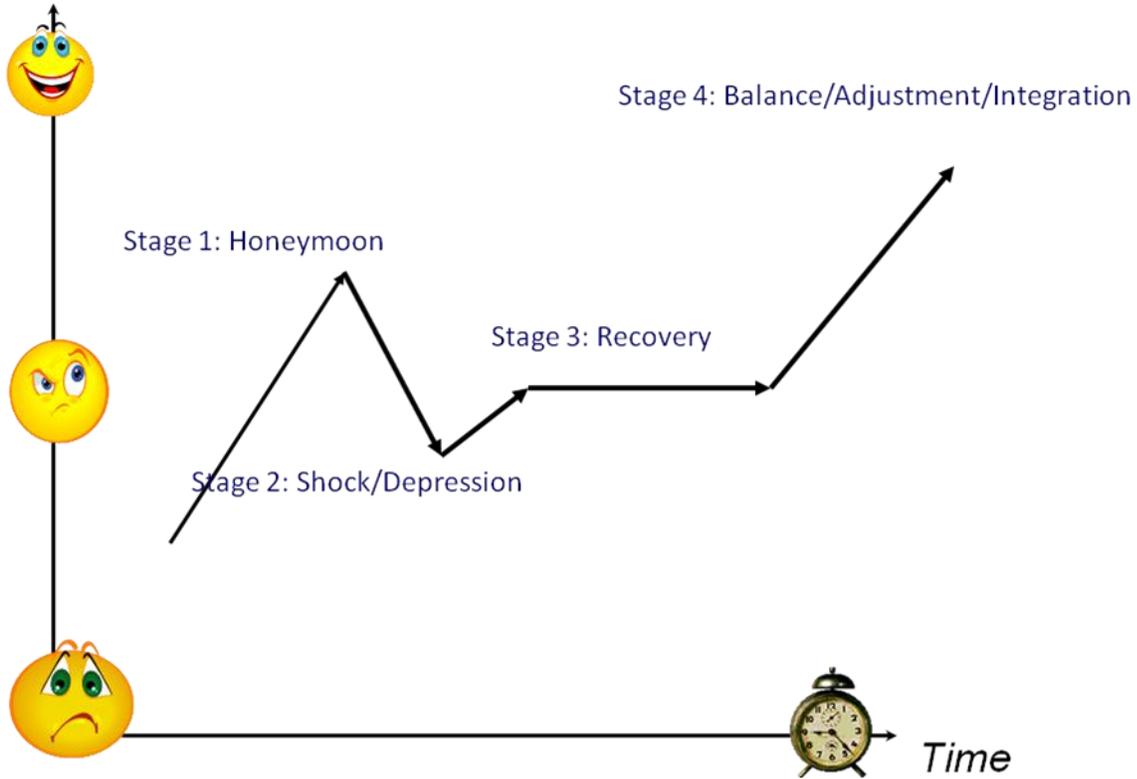
So far, my husband has managed to get promoted and has received two raises. I am very satisfied with my job and I recently got a raise. I think we have made it here in America. Not only have I learned English properly, but I also feel that I understand American values and the things that we American appreciate and respect. My goal is to enroll in an additional course at the Community College in order to expand my knowledge and get a better job. We are also saving money so we can buy a plane ticket for my mother to visit. She could help us in the household and look after our younger son, which would be very helpful since I plan to study. The beginning in a new country has changed me a great deal. I notice that I think differently than before, and my parents and brothers at home also say that I have changed.

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CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT



Happiness



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