

Tips for Students Dealing with Cultural Adjustment

- **Don't deny that you are experiencing culture shock.** It is not a sign of weakness. Accept that this adjustment is a challenge. Be patient with yourself - "This is normal, it will pass."
- **Set realistic expectations.**
- The first step to cultural adjustment is becoming aware of our own feelings and cultural patterns and how these affect your perceptions. Why does a situation confuse, anger or upset you?
 - **Being aware of your own cultural style** will allow you to adjust how you interact with other people. Be aware of and flexible with your own cultural values.
 - **Try not to be judgmental.** Being open-minded will give you a greater tolerance of things you don't understand.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions** if there is something you want to know or something you don't understand.
- **Try to think of yourself as a detective.** Why do people do things the way they do and act the way they do? Meet each challenge with imagination and an attitude of gaining new insight rather than being hard on yourself or the other culture.
- **Be aware of your environment.** Attention to what is happening in your environment will help you pick up on behaviour patterns. Mirror other people's body language and neutralise your own body language. By looking, listening and imitating appropriately what others are doing, you will communicate more effectively with those around you, reach out to others and make friendships.
- **Have a good attitude:** It is up to you whether you act positively rather than negatively to a strange environment.
 - **Try to stay emotionally calm** in situations that are frustrating or challenge your personal feelings.
 - **Have a positive self-image.** Be proud of who you are and where you come from. Have the attitude of maintaining your own culture while being open to learning about new cultures.
 - **Keep a sense of humour.** A positive self-image means you can laugh at yourself and your situation.

- **Don't be afraid to tell people about your home culture and country.** If you are used to doing things a different way in your culture, discuss this with your new Canadian friends. Many Canadians may be shy to ask you about your culture even though they are curious. Most people will be glad you shared your experiences with them, and being able to talk about your home country and cultural differences may make you feel better.
- **Don't be afraid of silences.** People need time to process what is being said and to think about things.
- **Get enough sleep & eat well** (physical health = mental health). Take care of yourself – if you're feeling overwhelmed, **take time to de-stress** by going for a walk, reading a good book in the park, or having a hot bath.
- **Take small risks.**
- **Trust your intuition.**
- **Take control of the aspects of daily life that you can** (ex. what to wear, where to eat). This will help balance the things you can't control.
- **Build a support system.** Keeping busy with different groups of people will keep you distracted during tough times. Talk to other people about how you are feeling. For example, you could share your feelings with a new friend, another international student, the Education Abroad Advisor, the International Student Advisor, a Residence Assistant or any other staff member.
- **Don't spend all of your time with people from your culture.** It is normal to seek out and spend time with people who are from the same culture as you, however, you will have a much more rewarding experience if you also make the effort to develop relationships and spend social time with people from the new culture you are in.
- **Step back and reflect.** (For example: keep a journal or blog).
- **Help someone else.** Helping a friend, volunteering or getting involved with an activity builds your confidence and reminds you of your own strengths and skills while doing a good deed.
- **Surround yourself with a few of your favourite things from home,** such as your favourite music or photographs of your family, to feel close to your own culture when needed.
- **Stay in touch with friends and family** (but don't rely on them completely).