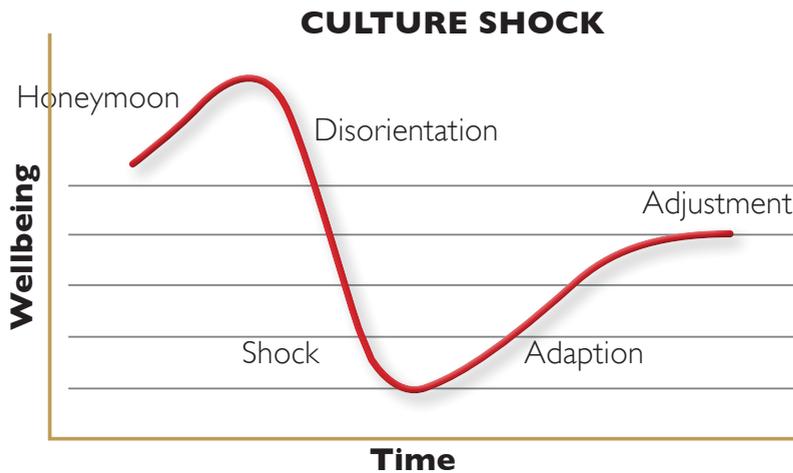


Culture Shock

Katarzyna Richter, Cross Cultural Psychologist discusses culture shock and its stages.



The term culture shock is frequently used in a light-minded way to describe our experiences of cultural differences and the way we cope with them. We need to understand that it is much more than a source of anecdotes about cultural misunderstandings. Culture shock was defined in 1960 by an anthropologist, Dr Kalervo Oberg, who described it as a process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar culture. There are 6 aspects of this process outlined:

- 1 Strain due to the effort required making necessary psychological adaptations.
 - 2 A sense of loss and feeling of deprivation with respect to friends, family, career, status or possessions.
 - 3 Being rejected by and/or rejecting members of a new culture.
 - 4 Confusion in role, role expectation, values, self-identity.
 - 5 Surprise, anxiety and even feeling of disgust after becoming aware of the cultural differences.
 - 6 Feelings of impotence due to not being able to cope with the new environment.
- It is inevitable to experience the syndromes of culture shock, whether you are a student going for a foreign exchange programme, a professional shifting his or her career to a different part of the world or becoming an expatriate for any reason. Each and every individual will feel like a fish out of water. The extent to which this experience will influence an individual will depend on several factors

such as personality, how adaptable, how resilient and how open-minded one is. Furthermore, how well prepared one is, the knowledge that we have about a country, language, its customs, laws and people will have an effect on our experience. Getting to know how the process of culture shock works saves us a lot of stress, time and may help in completing our international assignment as planned.

Process of cultural adjustment involves 5 phases:

- Honeymoon Phase** will find you enchanted by your new surroundings. You will feel excited, stimulated, enriched in love with local food, climate and people. You seem to notice only positive aspects of your new environment.
- The Crisis Phase** (culture shock) will make you start noticing things, which you didn't before. You learn that not all people are friendly; the new place is not as ideal as

you thought it to be. You feel confused, homesick, frustrated, and alone and realise that the familiar support systems are no longer available.

The Recovery & Adjustment Phases sneaks up on you when you least expect it. It's a sudden revelation of how much you have learned about new culture and adjusted to a new place. You will feel confident and objective about your experience, learning to accept and perhaps practice parts of a new culture while holding onto your own cultural traditions.

The Acceptance Phase. You embrace the new culture and see everything in a new realistic light. You feel confident with the differences and to certain extent may become a local expert, guiding newly arrived expats and sharing your culture skills.

Going through culture shock is not always a pleasant experience. But knowing that it's just a phase and a part of a bigger picture, known as acculturation process definitely helps ■

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LEVEL OF SATISFACTION



Culture shock is a sense of cultural disorientation in a different society.