





life of this university. Florida Tech recognizes this can be difficult. Let's talk about why it is a struggle for so many people and how this experience might feel.

CULTURE SHOCK

When you leave your home culture, you separate yourself from the people and surroundings that have defined your role in society. The first few weeks, or even months, may be hectic for you as you begin to adapt to the new culture. You may experience anxiety, disorientation, confusion and uncertainty. These feelings are often called "culture shock." Culture shock is not a clinical term or a medical condition. It is simply a common way to describe the confusion and nervous feelings a person may experience after leaving a familiar culture to live in a new and different culture. There are four phases of culture shock:

1. HONEYMOON PHASE: Students often see differences between the old and new cultures as wonderful and interesting. You may think to yourself:

"This is exciting! There are so many new things to try and to learn. It is different, but fun!"

But keep in mind, like all honeymoons, this exciting outlook on new things may not last forever.

2. NEGOTIATION PHASE: As students begin to see just how different their own culture is from the new one, feelings of anxiety, sadness or frustration may set in. This can create intense feelings of loyalty to your home country, cause withdrawal from people who are different from you and, perhaps, spark a desire to return home. Language barriers may be especially difficult during this phase. You may feel:

"Everything is TOO different here. I do not always feel like I fit in and sometimes I am uncertain of how to act in a situation. It makes me feel uncomfortable and worried. I miss home because I never had to feel this way there."

Try to remember that you are not alone—many students experience these thoughts and feelings. Happily, this stage will also pass.

3. ADJUSTMENT PHASE: After some time (which may take many months), students begin to understand the new culture and its customs. Routines and problem-solving skills for dealing with all the changes will develop, and you will begin to accept the new cultural ways with a positive attitude and have fewer negative experiences.

You might say:

"I have done and learned so many new things since I came here. This new culture is starting to make some sense, now that I am becoming familiar with the people and the customs. I have gone through a lot of changes since I first came, but life is finally starting to feel normal again."

Keep in mind adjustment is not the same for everyone as it comes at different times for different individuals. What is important to know is that if you keep working at it, this time will come for you too.

4. MASTERY PHASE (Biculturalism): Students participate fully and comfortably in the new culture and integrate their new experiences with their home country values. Students do not have to become a new person, but rather they integrate pieces of the new culture into their own. The transition is complete and these experiences are now a positive part of who you are and how you see the world.

If you are experiencing signs of culture shock, don't panic! You are not alone—these are normal reactions to adjusting to your educational experience. Sometimes it is hard to remember why you decided to leave home.

ADJUSTING TO A NEW ENVIRONMENT MAY TAKE A LONG TIME.

Individuals who cross cultures usually are uncomfortable at first and may feel:

- Confused
- Discouraged
- Lonely
- Anxious or fearful
- Misunderstood

However, as they get more comfortable, many individuals find that learning in a new culture:

- Provides a more stimulating learning experience
- Feels like an exciting adventure
- Adds to feelings of fulfillment and achievement in life
- Increases feelings of confidence and capability

SO HOW CAN YOU MAKE THIS TRANSITION?

Your first task is to get settled in the campus community. Some things may seem very new for a while:

- Your daily routine
- Meeting people, hearing English words/expressions and communicating in ways you are not familiar with (including non-verbal communication, such as hand gestures and eye contact)
- Things may differ from your home country such as climate, health care practices, driving and other transportation systems, monetary systems and currency exchange

Try to think of all these new experiences as opportunities to grow and learn. The best way to take full advantage of them is to become involved in the