

# Culture Shock

...and Reverse Culture Shock

- General Information Handbook 2014
  - Culture Shock - pp. 159 - 165
  - Reverse Culture Shock - pp. 183 (w/charts on pp. 184/185)

# Culture Shock

- When interacting with people from other cultures remember:
  - 1) People often are not aware of the cultural factors that determine the way they think/behave (expectations)
  - 2) You will need to search for the underlying reasons why you, and people from other cultures, perceive situations the way you, and they, do (*why you think what you think*)

## Preparing yourself

- We are a product of our culture – the shock
  - Interpretation and evaluation
  - Experience ways of thinking that are different from/conflict with your own
  - Discomfort and emotional conflict
- Suspend judgment
  - Evaluate situations from host culture's perspective
- Re-examine your assumptions and social behaviors that (you thought) were absolute
  - Learn about your own culture

## Cultural adjustment

- four stage cycle that may repeat
- timing of the curves are individual dependent
- 1/3 of JET participants claim they did not experience culture shock
- see p. 161

# Stages

- 1) Initial Euphoria (Delusion)
  - High expectations/too positive
  - Excitement abounds
  - Differences ignored
  - May last a week to months
  - Bubble burst

# Stages

## 2) Irritation/Hostility (Shock)

- We're different...
- Exaggeration sets in
- Homesickness
- Negativity towards host culture

## Culture Shock In-depth (pp 163-164)

### 1) Why it happens

- Goodbye routine, hello unfamiliarity
- Uncertainty about procedures to follow
- Inability to control (maneuver through) life

### 2) Factors affecting duration/intensity

- Degree of differences
- Degree of choice and motivations
- Learned flexibility
- Degree of emotional security (confidence)
- Degree of emotional support
- Financial support
- Availability and use of therapy
- Ability to release tension
- Availability of fulfilling work
- Degree of cultural absolutism/judgment
- Language competency



## Culture Shock In-depth (pp 163-164)

### 3) Signs of culture shock

- Anxiety without apparent cause
- Lack of confidence
- Genki-gone
- Loss of initiative
- Unjustified anger of delays (Japanese-specific?) and minor *frustrations* (exaggeration)
- Hopelessness
- Earning to interact with your own culture
- Excessive sleeping/reading

## Culture Shock In-depth (pp 163-164)

- Most experience it more than once, and the second dip is worse (enjoy!)
- Refer to GIH
- Shock for returning JETs minimized if they know it's coming

# Stages

## 3) Gradual Adjustment

- We're have differences...but that's OK
- Will likely happen without you being aware
- Interpretation of culture cues
- More comfort/less isolation
- You'll be alright!

# Stages

## 4) Accommodation and Biculturalism

- Full recovery (it's not a disease) will lead to the infamous “personal growth” – the crown jewel
  - Confidence
  - Enjoyment and adoption of customs and attitude of host culture

Reverse Culture Shock – here we go again!

# Coping Strategies

- Minimize shock through anticipation and following these strategies:
  - Eat well (care packages)
  - Exercise regularly
  - Maintain contact with family/friends
  - Journal
  - Remember your motivations and goals
  - Learn to say “no” to superiors/coworkers?
  - Relax – don’t be over active when tolerance limits approach
    - Hide yourself ! Read, listen to music, go to bed early, etc.
  - Talk – contact PA helpline numbers p. 236

# Reverse Culture Shock

- similar to culture shock, but could be longer/more severe
- potential to be worse since unexpected
- your home country and yourself has changed
- prepare yourself by reading about others experiences
- 62% believed they experience reverse culture shock

# Coping Strategies

- Before you leave
  - Reflect on tenure
  - Explore your feelings about leaving
  - Anticipate that everything has changed
  - Make long-term goals to motivate you – work/relationships
  - Explore employment/study options
  - Stay current w/events

## Coping Strategies

- After you come home:
  - Expect difficulties and that other people won't understand why
  - Develop support system
    - Boredom, apathy, loneliness, alienation, anxiety and depression
  - Others don't want to hear about it...and their stories are boring
  - Maintain ties with Japan – friendships, visits, classes, *JETAA!*, or the media.
  - Recognize that you have changed
    - Do not go try to go back to the “old you” – celebrate!
  - Your friends are boring and narrow-minded
  - You may be out of date
  - Realize your special treatment is over (cry/celebrate!)
  - Recognize that it wasn't as great as you think
  - The positive – reverse culture shock is the culmination of your amazing experience (for now...)