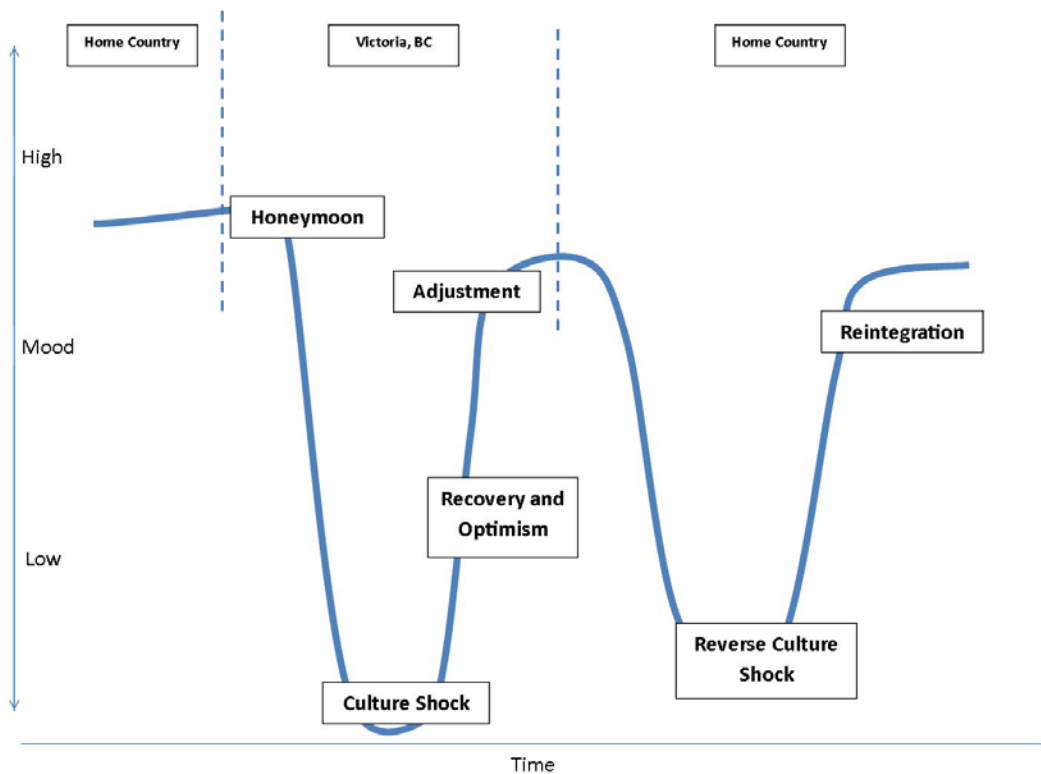


Culture Shock

The first few weeks living in a new country with a new family can be difficult for many students. Your student may feel homesick and frustrated with their new environment and the language. Some students deal with change better than others, but all new students will go through a predictable sequence of stages in adjusting to new circumstances. The adjustment phase, also called Culture Shock, usually takes 3 to 4 months, but will depend on the length of your student's stay. Culture Shock is a natural adjustment process, and learning about it will help you understand some of the emotions your student will likely experience.



Stages of Culture Shock: Adapted from Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963)

Honeymoon: Upon arrival in Victoria, your student will feel excited and eager to learn about their new home. Everything will seem new and wonderful! Typically this stage is relatively short, but socializing with other students, getting orientated to Victoria, and being involving in the family's activities will help make the overall transition a smoother and more positive process for your student.

Culture Shock: As your student settles in to daily life, the novelty and excitement will wear off, and they may start feeling sad or unsatisfied. Students typically begin to miss their family, friends, and everything that was familiar. Students long for home and may become sad or depressed.

Recovery and Optimism: Once your student's new life becomes more familiar and they are more comfortable with living in Victoria, they will be happier. Students that make friends and experience

success in their courses reach this stage earlier. So encourage them to do their best to meet others, socialize, and join in activities!

Adjustment/Acculturation: Students will become more comfortable in their surroundings, will be able to balance Canadian culture with their own culture, and embrace differences. Students will begin to appreciate their experience and living abroad.

Reverse Culture Shock: Your student will experience many of the same ups and downs when they return home. Students appreciate staying in touch with their hosts and fellow students. They will want to talk about their experience and reminisce the times shared. Please make sure you connect with them after they have returned to their home country, and keep in touch.

Reintegration: Your student will learn to adjust their new perspectives into their home country's environment and eventually feel comfortable with their experience. While living abroad may have been difficult at times for your student, it undoubtedly helped them become better global citizens.

Symptoms of culture shock that you may notice in your student:

1. Excitement and stimulation
2. Confusion, irritability, or withdrawal
3. Sudden intense feeling of loyalty to home culture
4. Physical reactions such as appetite change or headaches
5. Changes in sleep patterns (more or less sleep is needed)
6. Depression, boredom, or lack of motivation
7. Relationship stress

Many students don't realize that what they are experiencing is culture shock, so if you notice any of the indicators in your student, we encourage you to check in with them. Students can talk about how they are feeling with you, a friend, a teacher or inform the Homestay Program. Not all students will exhibit symptoms of culture shock, but most will experience the roller coaster ride of adjusting to a new culture – here are some tips for helping your student adjust:

- Encourage them to take part in the family's activities, whether it is an evening out for a walk, the movies or helping clean up after dinner.
- Allow them to decorate their room with pictures from home – a cork or white erase board helps.
- Communicate with your student and ask them how they are feeling.
- Ask your student if they would like to invite friends over – this will help them socialize with others.
- Ask your student their food likes and dislikes.
- Ask your student about their home country and culture, perhaps ask the student to help you make a traditional recipe.

Developing friendships and a strong relationship with your family will help your student deal with culture shock and likely make the feelings and symptoms less severe. We trust that you will have a wonderful experience with your student, and please know that the Homestay Program coordinators are here to support you!