



### What is It?

Culture shock is your mind and body's reaction to being disoriented and feeling overwhelmed by a culture that is not familiar to you. It can cause psychological and physical discomfort.

### Things to Remember

1. Culture shock does not come from one single event. It comes after you encounter different ways of doing things, different ways of thinking about things, and/or values that are different from your own culture.
2. Culture shock does not strike suddenly. It builds up slowly from a series of small events which are sometimes hard to identify.
3. It is not easy to know why you feel unhappy, why you do not want to participate in activities with your host friends, and why you do not want to speak the local language.

### Common Symptoms of Culture Shock:

#### Physical Symptoms:

Too much or too little sleep  
Eating too much or no appetite  
Frequent minor illnesses  
Upset stomach  
Headaches

#### Psychological Symptoms:

Loneliness or boredom  
Homesickness & idealizing home  
Feeling helpless  
Irritability or hostility  
Social withdrawal  
Great concern for health & security  
Rebellion against rules  
Crying  
Stereotyping of host country people

### How Can You Overcome Culture Shock?

**First, you should remember that culture shock is a normal part of adjustment.** You will have some of the symptoms, and some of your reactions will be emotional and not rational.

**Second, try to objectively analyze the differences you are finding between your home and host cultures.** Look for the reasons your host culture does things differently. Remember, host customs are logical to them, just as your home customs are logical to you.

**Third, set some goals for yourself to re-develop your own sense of control of your life.** These should be small tasks that you can accomplish each day.

**Fourth, find local friends or acquaintances who are sympathetic and understanding.** Talk to them about your feelings and specific situations. They can help you understand ideas from their cultural point of view.

**Finally, remember that you became a YFU student to live in another culture and learn about it.** Develop the attitude that you can live with the differences and confusions and still learn & enjoy yourself. You do not need to worry about losing your own cultural values or identity just because you might feel comfortable in another culture.

**\*Remember, your host family, LC, and SSM are here to help you get through it!**