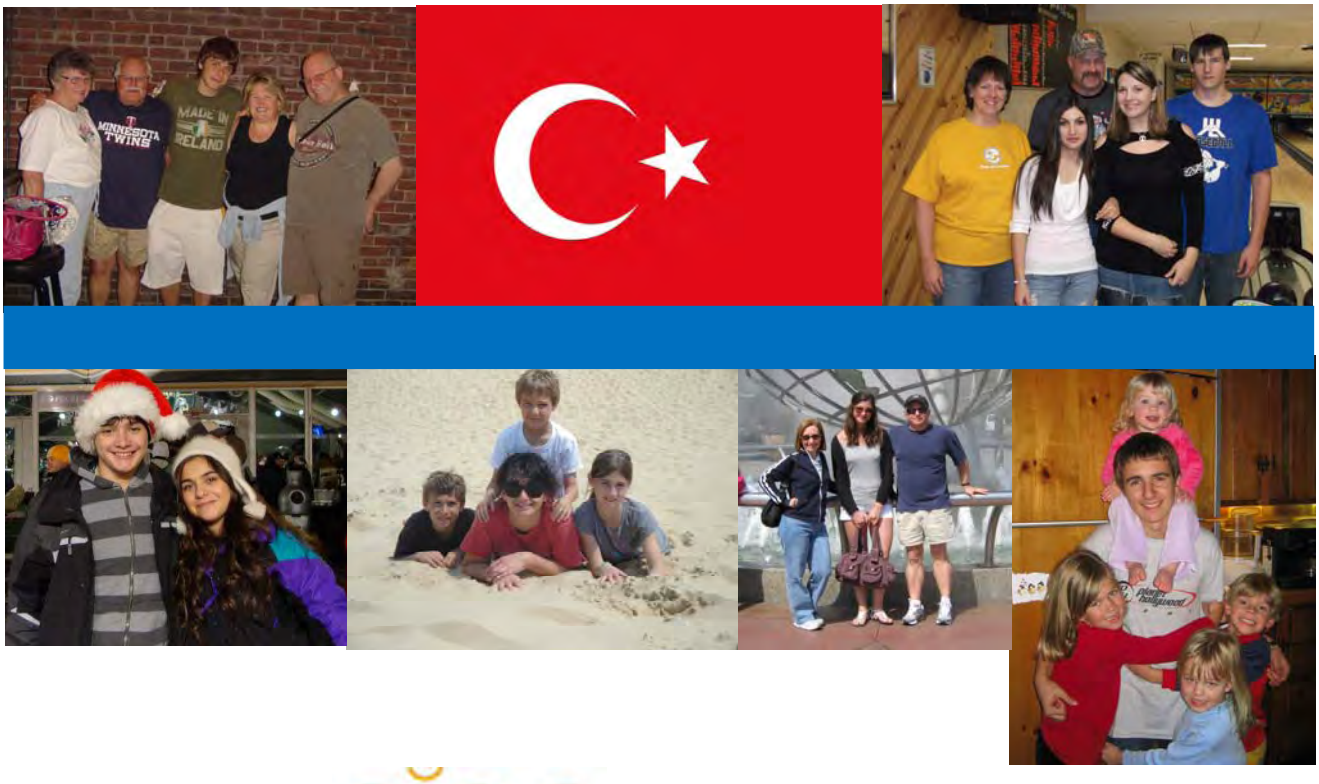
Handbook for Host Families of Turkish Participants



2010

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

This publication is made possible through support from the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. http://exchanges.state.gov

The following individuals are responsible for the contents of this handbook:

AFS-USA Volunteers:
- Marjorie Bigelow – World Flags Area Team
- Zeynep Delen – Friends Across New England Area Team
- Elyse Franko-Filipasic – Capitol Area Team
- Esra Kucukciftci – Western PA Area Team
- Asli Soner Smith – Baltimore Area Team
- Lynn Whetstone – Silver and Gold Area Team
- Kathleen Zamboni – Northwest California Area Team

ACES Staff
- Maria Szablya – Program Associate

AFS-Turkey Staff
- Cemre Ak'in – Hosting and Training Coordinator
- Hazar Yildirim – Volunteer Development and Communication Coordinator
- Duygu Kutluay – Organizational Development Director

AFS-USA Staff
- Robin Weber – Manager, Intercultural Education and Quality

Editorial assistance provided by Dana Bigelow and Eamon Furlong.

AFS-USA maintains this handbook on behalf of its YES consortium partners including ACES, AIFS Foundation, CIEE and PAX.

Cover pictures courtesy of Loduha family and Pinar Ilgar, Pritzl family and Pinar Yayin, Comeau family and Ipek Altan, Ketter family and Eray Meral, Hawkins family and Deniz Ugar Kemahli, Perlmutter family and Cansu Kazancıoğlu, Zeynep Delen and Kathleen Zamboni.

Turkish Culture Quiz

Perhaps you are already familiar with Turkish culture. Or maybe you only know only a little. In either case, you should find the following questions interesting. After responding to these questions, check the answers that follow. Whether you got the answers right or wrong, you'll want to read the sections referenced in the answer sheet.

1. Most Turkish students are used to the same levels of privacy and personal space in the home as most U.S. teenagers. **True** **False**

2. Turkey is a Muslim country. **True** **False**

3. Turkish students are usually very straightforward and use a direct style of communication. Host families can assume the student will be open and there will be few misunderstandings or miscommunications. **True** **False**

4. Gestures are important in the Turkish style of communication. **True** **False**

5. The overall population density of Turkey is twice that of the USA. **True** **False**

6. Since both American and Turkish families typically focus very much on their children, your Turkish student can be expected to fit quickly and easily in to your family. **True** **False**

7. The Turkish mother is often considered the "ruler" of her household who is expected to dote on her family as well as run the house. **True** **False**

8. In the Turkish culture people are generally more focused on the "here and now" than planning for the future, as we tend to be in the U.S. **True** **False**

9. Turkish families typically eat their evening meal together, sitting around a table where people can reach to serve themselves and sometimes eat out of a common salad bowl. **True** **False**

10. "No" means "yes" at a Turkish dinner table. **True** **False**

11. Since most Turkish exchange students come from urban areas, they will understand and be comfortable with the American practice of "dating." **True** **False**

12. Taking off one's shoes when entering a home or mosque, the long-standing ritual of the Turkish bath, the presence of a bidet in home bathrooms, and the practice of removing body hair are all examples of the importance that most Turkish people place on cleanliness. **True** **False**

13. Fifty percent of Turkish students who take the university entrance exam are admitted to a university. **True** **False**

14. In Turkey it would be considered rude to neglect to send a "Thank You" card to the giver of a gift within a week of receiving it. **True** **False**

Turkish Culture Quiz Answers

1. Most Turkish students are used to the same levels of privacy and personal space in the home as most U.S. teenagers.
   False--Most Turkish teenagers are used to having less privacy and personal space (tangible and intangible) in the home than the average U.S. teenager (see *Culture and Perception*, page 19 and *Family Life*, page 35).

2. Turkey is a Muslim country.
   False--Turkey is a secular country, which means that most aspects of daily life and all aspects of state-run institutions are entirely separate from religion. However, the vast majority of Turkish people identify themselves as Muslims (see *Religion*, page 21).

3. Turkish students are usually very straightforward and use a direct style of communication. Host families can assume the student will be open and there will be few misunderstandings or miscommunications.
   False--Though Turkish students enjoy conversations and opportunities to talk about their day, their culture is one that favors an indirect style of communication. U.S. Americans may find this to lead to some misunderstandings and a feeling that their student is not being honest with them. The students might feel it would be disrespectful to directly confront adults (see *Communication*, page 23).

4. Gestures are important in the Turkish style of communication.
   True--Taking the time to understand differences in nonverbal communication will help you better understand your Turkish student (see *Communication*, page 22).

5. The overall population density of Turkey is twice that of the USA.
   False--The overall population density of Turkey is almost three times that of the U.S.A. It is much higher in Turkey's larger cities, where most participants are from (see *Sense of Space*, page 30).

6. Since both American and Turkish families typically focus very much on their children, your Turkish student can be expected to fit quickly and easily in to your family.
   False--Although it is true that American families tend to be "child-centered" and Turkish families also focus on their children, it will take time for your Turkish teenager to learn your family's routines, schedules, preferences, habits, rules and expectations (see *Family Life*, page 35.)

7. The Turkish mother is often considered the "ruler" of her household who is responsible for doting on her family as well as running the house.
   True--As a result, your Turkish student may expect the host mom to do more for the student than is typical in the U.S. (see *Family Life*, page 35).

8. In the Turkish culture people are generally more focused on the "here and now" than planning for the future, as we tend to be in the U.S.
   True--Turkish culture is very present oriented and this is related to the belief that one's fate or destiny is predetermined by God (see *Sense of Time*, page 42).

9. Turkish families typically eat their evening meal together, sitting around a table where people can reach to serve themselves and sometimes eat out of a common salad bowl.
   True--The evening meal, usually prepared by the mother, is a time for families to gather and share a meal. Sharing a salad bowl and reaching across the table to serve oneself are common practices for many family members (see *Food and Mealtimes*, page 45).

10. "No" means "yes" at a Turkish dinner table.
    False--"No" means "maybe" at a Turkish table. It is part of Turkish hospitality to offer food several times. It is considered rude to decline the first offer, but it is not impolite to decline the next offer/s since this will be interpreted as being polite and just saying "maybe." U.S. host families may need to offer seconds to their Turkish student multiple times, so that the student doesn't go hungry in an attempt to be polite (see *Food and Mealtimes*, page 45).

11. Since most Turkish exchange students come from urban areas, they will understand and be comfortable with the U.S. American practice of "dating."
    False--Turkish teenagers have developed their expectations about teenage dating and sex in the U.S. from TV and movies. This may be very different from actual practice in your community and is much different from customs in Turkey (see *Teenage Life*, page 50).

12. Taking off one's shoes when entering a home or mosque, the long-standing ritual of the Turkish bath, the presence of a bidet in home bathrooms, and the practice of removing body hair are all examples of the importance that most Turkish people place on cleanliness.
    True--Although Turkish teens place a strong emphasis on cleanliness, host families frequently mention that their student's behaviors and practices are different than those of their own family. Learning in advance about Turkish grooming and appearance standards, and why they are as they are, can help minimize the potential for a culture clash (see *Personal Care and Health Matters*, page 55).

13. Fifty percent of Turkish students who take the university entrance exam are admitted to a university.
    False--The university entrance exam is extremely competitive and only twenty percent of students are admitted (see *School and Education System*, page 58).

14. In Turkey it would be considered rude to neglect to send a “Thank You” card to the giver of a gift within a week of receiving it.
    False—“Thank You” cards, and holiday cards, are not commonly used in Turkey (see *Holidays*, page 62).

Forward

Thank you for volunteering to welcome a young student from Turkey into your home, family and community. The coming months will present a multitude of learning opportunities for you and your participant.

Objectives of Handbook

This Handbook for Host Families of Turkish Participants is directed toward you, the host family. You represent one of the indispensable ingredients required for an international exchange program to be successful. The information contained here will also be shared with exchange program support volunteers so that they too will better understand the Turkish student's world view and will be able to provide culturally sensitive and appropriate support to both the hosted student and the host family.

Awareness of the existence of cultural differences and how to deal with these differences can have a profoundly positive impact on the quality of your relationship with your participant and on your entire family's hosting experience. To this end, this handbook is designed to help you learn about both the Turkish **and** U.S. cultures by examining a number of topics in contrast with each other. We hope that you find these topics to be interesting and informative:

- Predominant communication styles in the U.S.A. and Turkey;
- Turkish family life and relationships;
- Turkish cultural norms regarding personal appearance and religion;
- Key differences between the U.S. and Turkish school systems;
- The general Turkish and U.S. American views on concepts such as time and space.

Of course, you are not expected to read through this Handbook in one sitting! At first you will probably want to familiarize yourself with its contents, read intensively those areas of special interest to you and then during the coming weeks continue to refer back to the various topics as situations occur. We hope that you will enjoy yourself as you and your family join together with your Turkish student in this cultural exchange.

Participant Selection Process

If your student came to the U.S. on the YES Program he or she was selected by AFS but you as a host family may be participating through AFS, ACES, AIFS Foundation, CIEE or PAX. If you are an AFS host family you may be hosting a non-YES student. For more information please see the Appendix.

Overview

"Cradle of Civilizations", "Mosaic of Cultures", "Land Where the Continents Meet" … these are a few of the many names given to Asia Minor (Anatolia), the geographical area where the modern Republic of Turkey is located. It is here where the world's first cities were built, the first coins were minted, the first Christian churches were erected and where there is much more to discover that helped shape today's modern civilizations!

Who is a Turk?

The simple answer is that anyone who is a citizen of Turkey is a Turk or Turkish. In this booklet we are going to use the term "Turkish" because the term "Turk" has had different meanings throughout history such as an "ethnic and cultural" background.

Ethnic forefathers of Turks in nations like Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan are Oghuz Turks, who migrated from central Asia into Europe and Middle East between 6th and 10th centuries. This is how and why Turkey shares a common heritage and language with these Turkic nations.

During the Ottoman era the term "Turk" was used to refer to all Muslim inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire regardless of ethnicity. Today, as apparent from the wide variety of physical characteristics of Turkish people (color of hair ranges from red to brunette to black to blonde, and there are many shades of skin color), Turkish people can be one or a combination of different ethnicities including European, Turk, Kurd, Jewish, Armenian, and *Rum* (Anatolian Greeks) to name only a few.

After World War I, the borders of the Ottoman Empire became much smaller. Currently, an estimated 1.8 % of Turkish people reside outside Turkey, some of these in large Turkish communities in Europe (both from former Ottoman settlements and newer settlements), North America and Australia.

Ask your student where his or her ancestors are from. You might be surprised to find roots from different continents.

The Republic of Turkey, as it is officially called, straddles the border of Europe and Asia, with the majority of the country located in Asia, and has a total area of 314,512.32 square miles – almost the size of Texas and Louisiana combined.

Turkey has a population of 75 million. More than 70 percent of the population live in an urban setting (see *Sense of Space*). Istanbul, population around 13 million, is the only city in the world located on two continents (Europe and Asia).

A Brief History

The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 after nearly 600 years of Ottoman reign. The Ottoman Empire was the greatest world power at its peak in the 16th century. It was comprised of vast stretches of Northern Africa, Southern Europe and Western Asia. This far-reaching empire incorporated many cultures, religions and different ways of life for centuries, the influence of which are still very much a part of Turkish life and culture today.

Mustafa Kemal led the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 after a three-year war of independence and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. He had a vision for the republic. On assuming office, he initiated a series of radical reforms of the country's political, social and economic life. Women were given equal rights, the alphabet was changed from Arabic to Latin, titles of honor were abolished, and surnames were taken. He was given the surname Atatürk, which means "Father of Turks." Atatürk outlawed the wearing of the turban and the fez and urged his fellow citizens to modernize. The ideology of Ataturk's reforms became known as Kemalism, which is comprised of republicanism, nationalism, populism, reformism, etatism and secularism. These are the fundamental and unchanging principles at the core of the Turkish constitution.

Secularism in Turkey means freedom of religion and total exclusion of religion from all governmental activities including education.

Atatürk's legacy is still remembered and honored in modern Turkey. Offices, schools, and even many restaurants and private shops carry his portrait and statues in his image can be found throughout the country.

The Turkish flag has a crescent and a star on a red background. The symbolism of the Turkish flag dates back to about 400 B.C.

Atatürk is a highly revered figure in Turkey. Disrespect to his memory is not tolerated. The flag has similar importance. The rules about respecting the flag are more stringent in Turkey than they are in the U.S.

Educate yourself. We went online and read about the country of Turkey, its government, culture, history and food. We asked a lot of questions of our student as well. **U.S. Host Family**

The young lady we had was a Muslim from a very modern Turkish home. Three things I noticed were: (1) They were somewhat nervous about telling people in their school that they were Muslim. (2) Do not in any way say anything disparaging about Ataturk. (3) They have a great deal of pride about their country. **U.S. Host Family**

Culture

What is Culture?

Cultural experts have defined culture in the following ways:

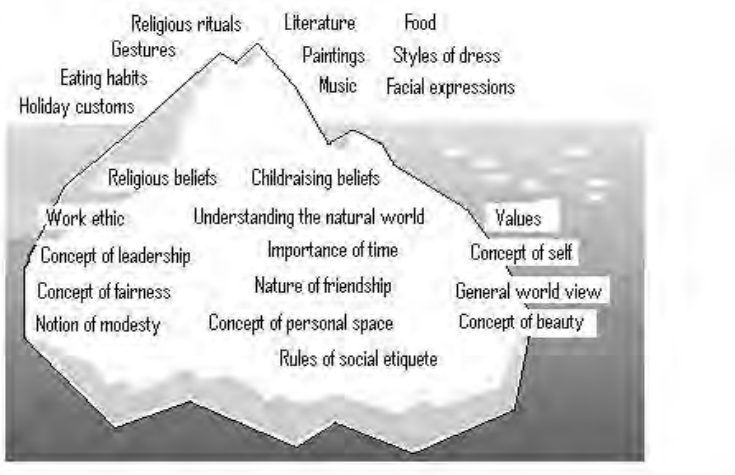
- *Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another*. — Geert Hofstede
- *That whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, morals, customs, and any capabilities or habits acquired by one as a member of a certain group. It is passed on from generation to generation, and it shapes our behaviors and structures our perceptions.* — Donna M. Stringer and Patricia A. Cassidy

Culture is a set of behaviors, values and beliefs created by groups of people, giving them a sense of community and purpose.

Its rules are often followed unconsciously. You may belong to any number of cultures, such as a workplace culture, faith culture, generational culture, and/or geographically defined culture. Each culture has its own set of characteristics that gives those within it a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves or, on the other hand, of being different from the norm for that culture.

The Cultural Iceberg

One way to understand the various parts of culture is by thinking about culture as if it were an iceberg. The iceberg shows that some elements of culture are above the surface of the water and are visible and we are aware of these aspects of culture because they are reflected in our **behaviors**. Other cultural aspects that lie under the water line are invisible, and they aren't obvious to us. These are what noted anthropologist Edward T. Hall calls the "hidden dimensions" of culture, and they include our **values, norms and beliefs**.

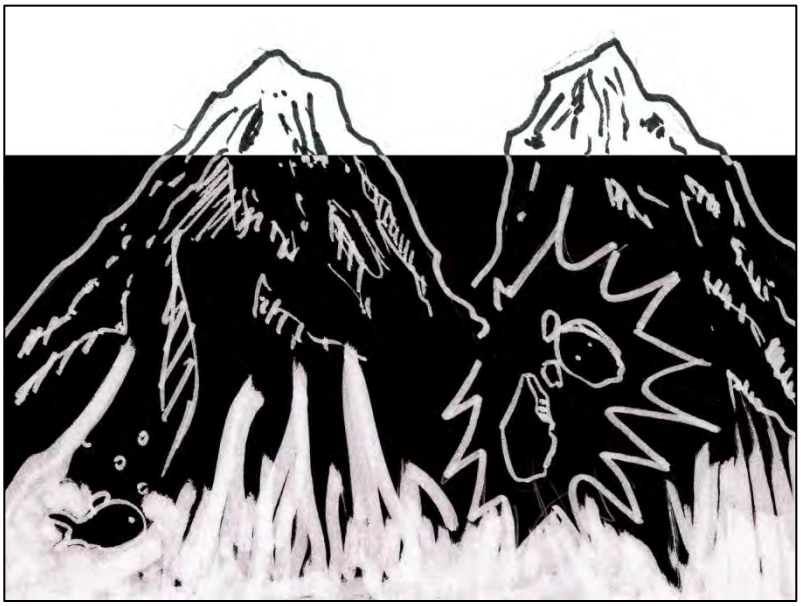


(http://www.uop.edu/sis/culture/File/sec1-1-1h1.htm)

The visible and invisible parts of culture interact with each other in ways that you probably don't normally stop to consider. For example, a common nonverbal behavior such as waving good-bye is visible, but what that gesture means is invisible. In one culture it could mean “good-bye”, in another “come here”, and yet another “go away.”

When two cultures, like two icebergs, collide, the real clash occurs not in those visible differences but rather below the surface where values, beliefs and thought patterns conflict.

During the hosting experience you and your hosted participant may feel uncomfortable with a situation but don’t quite know why. Chances are good that you are experiencing cultural differences “below the surface of the water.” Being aware of this dynamic and the potential for learning that exists within it are a huge part of the cultural learning process.



Art by Michael Capozzola www.Capozzola.com

While your hosted participant is the newcomer in this scenario, as a host family member you too will have the opportunity to gain a new perspective on Turkish and U.S. culture. This process of mutual enrichment and learning is what thousands of participants, host families, and natural families will tell you is at the heart of the hosting experience.

You may be wondering, “How can I learn about myself through contact with someone different from me?” It is most often through the contrast between the two, that new awareness and knowledge arise. In other words, you may not be aware of your own values, beliefs, and customs until you come into contact with someone whose values, beliefs, and customs differ from your own. The goal of this handbook is to help you build awareness of your own and your participant’s culture in order to help you both have a more enjoyable and educational hosting experience.

Generalizations and Stereotypes

To help you along in this process of mutual discovery which the hosting experience presents, it is often useful to look to **cultural generalizations.**

Cultural generalizations are defined as the tendency of the majority of people within a culture group to share certain values, beliefs and behaviors. Generalizations do not apply to all people within a culture group, and so should be used only as a guide to understanding the group.

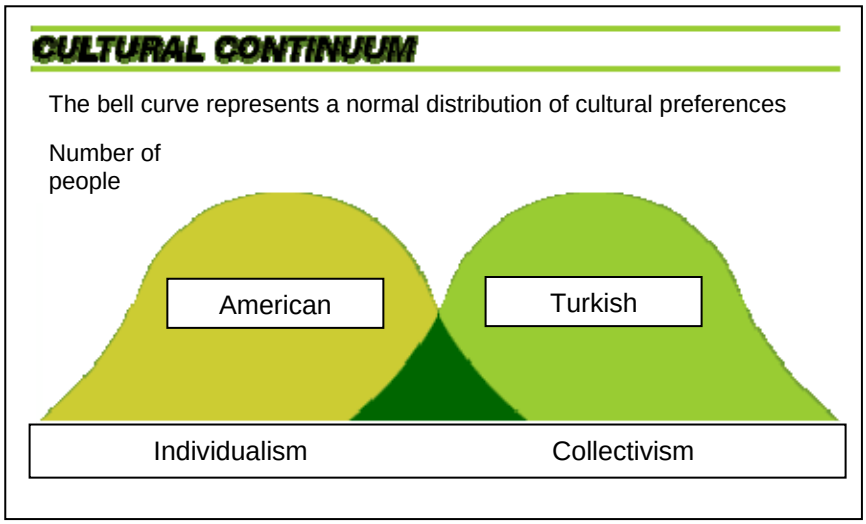
An example of a cultural generalization is the strongly held **U.S. American value of individualism**. U.S. Americans tend to like to do things themselves and see themselves as responsible for their own lives. These things are reflected in popular expressions such as "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps." Even the Nike slogan, "Just Do It" suggests that we control our own destiny. But this doesn't mean that all Americans value individualism in the same way and to the same degree. Rather, on average, Americans hold this value and their culture views this as a positive.

Cultural generalizations must not be confused with cultural stereotypes, which are fixed ideas or exaggerated beliefs about every individual in the culture group. They are often negative in nature and not tested.

An example of a **cultural stereotype** would be *U.S. Americans are materialistic*.

To better understand the difference between cultural generalizations and stereotypes, please refer to the figure on the following page. On the left side, **individualism** (emphasis on well-being of the individual) is displayed and on the right side is the Turkish value of **collectivism**. A collectivist culture is one in which the interests of the group, whether it be family, classmates or community, are given priority over those of the individual. People from such cultures tend to avoid confrontation and directly revealing negative feelings as we often do in the U.S. Maintaining harmony within a group is very important in a collectivist culture. Family ties also tend to be stronger than those in individualist cultures (see *Communication*).

The mid-point of the bell curve for U.S. Americans shows that on average, individualism is the dominant cultural value. However, the curve also shows that some U.S. Americans are much closer to the collectivist value. Conversely, collectivism is the norm in the Turkish culture but some Turkish people can be found on the individualist side.



The bell curves show that there is a great deal of value diversity within each culture group, while at the same time there is a preferred or dominant cultural value.

The shaded area shows how some U.S. Americans and Turkish people may be more like each other on this trait than they are like the average U.S. American or Turkish person. For example, a U.S. teen from a rural community might have more in common with a Turkish teen from a rural community than a U.S. teen from an urban area. In fact, you may find that many of the similarities and differences that you and your student may encounter are related to general characteristics of urban versus small town life.

Our student grew up in a very rural area and had experience on his grandparents' farm so he fit right into our family and living arrangements. He had chores at home as well as our children having chores. We clearly talked about our expectations and asked him for input on anything he didn't understand. **U.S. Host Family**

Exchange students tend to be outside the norm for one or more cultural traits in comparison to their peers. Simply leaving one's family for a year to study abroad is highly unusual in Turkish society. And acting as a host family is not very common in the U.S.! You and your participant are likely to have in common an open mind and an interest in learning about other cultures, key elements of a successful hosting experience.

It is also important to keep in mind that culture is not the only factor influencing behavior. People can differ in many other ways, such as their likes and dislikes, personalities, and life experiences (see figure on the left below). The situation at hand can also have an impact on how people behave. For this reason, we emphasize that cultural generalizations should only be a starting point for exploration and discussion on how your cultural values may be similar to or different than those of your participant.

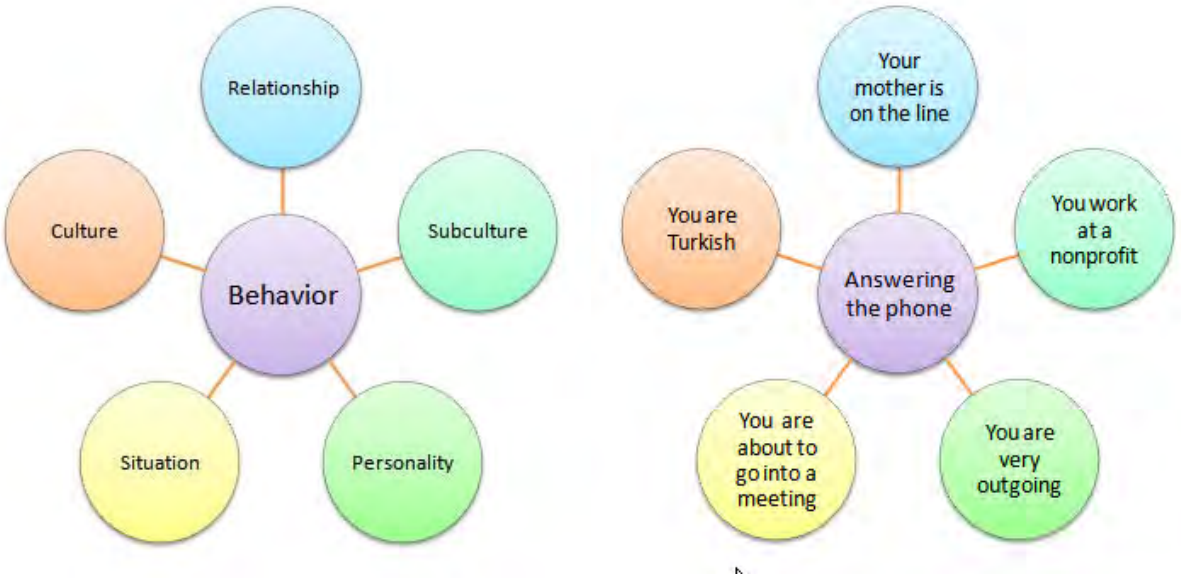


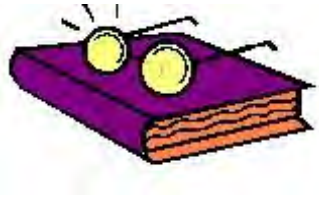
Figure 1
Factors that may influence behaviors

In the above scenario on the right, a Turkish person would most likely take the call and converse with his or her mother for several minutes (and her colleagues would not object or think it inappropriate), reflecting the strong family ties that are the norm in Turkey (see *Family Life*). Change any factor in this situation and the behavior in the center may change.

While many things can influence one's behavior, cultural generalizations serve as a basis for comparison and exploration of cultural differences and similarities.

Reaching an accurate understanding of the reasons behind any behavior that may seem puzzling or unusual to you (or your participant) will require effective communication between you and your participant. We hope that this handbook will serve as a starting point for this dialogue!

Culture and Perception



Culture shapes your perception in the same way that what you see can be changed by the color of glasses you wear.
For example, if you were to look at a yellow car while wearing a pair of blue-tinted glasses the car would appear green. However, if you were to view the same yellow car through pink-tinted glasses, it would appear orange. Similarly, you and your participant may see the same situation with two different "cultural lenses" or sets of values, norms and beliefs. If you are not aware of the color of each other's lens -- in other words, the cultural context of a given situation -- conflict and misunderstandings are more likely to occur.

Take, for example, the **task vs. relationship** value contrast. In general, U.S. Americans place great importance on speed, efficiency and "getting the job done." We place great importance on deadlines and schedules, and we consider being punctual a sign of respect for others. We tend to view achieving a particular task in a timely manner more important than maintaining or developing relationships we have with those involved in helping achieve that task.

On the other hand, in Turkey a more relaxed attitude toward time generally exists, and the norm is to strive to maintain harmonious relationships with those involved in a shared task. For example, it would be a sign of disrespect to those present to cut one meeting short for the sole purpose of being on time for another. This is changing somewhat, however, in Istanbul and other large cities in Turkey, where the digital age and other influences have resulted in a new generation of multi-tasking, iPhone savvy urbanites, the likes of which can be found in any major city in the U.S. or abroad.

This segment of the population has been described as operating in "very last minute" mode, perhaps as a result of trying to bridge the gap between the obligations and pleasures of a slower paced, more relationship-centered home life with the demands and opportunities presented by a faster paced atmosphere in the work place or at school.

How might these differences play out in your hosting experience?

Here is one possible scenario:

> *It's a typical, busy, weekday afternoon shortly after the arrival of your participant. Family members are now returning from school, work and various other activities. You need help unloading groceries, the dog needs to be fed, one sibling goes to her room to do homework and the other sits himself down in front of the computer. You get a call from your spouse who is running late. You say a quick hello to your student and ask him to unload the groceries so that you can begin to prepare dinner. He is dilly-dallying in your opinion, moving at a snail's pace, asking you about your day, telling you about his, wanting your advice on what he should wear to the assembly the next day. The phone rings and you move to another room to take the call so you can take notes on what you are expected to prepare for the next PTA meeting. He follows. You point in the direction of the car outside, gesturing as if carrying groceries. Your student looks confused, retreats to his room and emerges looking glum when called for dinner.*

What happened here? How might the student perceive your behavior, how might you perceive the student's behavior? Figure 2 provides a likely explanation.

While other value differences are influencing the situation (see *Family Life*, *Sense of Space* and *Sense of Time*) we will focus on the fact that the host parent is trying to accomplish the task of unloading the groceries so that she can begin making dinner while the student is seeking to connect with her by asking about her day, sharing what happened during his day, and eliciting advice from her. Having "dilly-dallied" and not retrieved the groceries, she perceives his behavior as uncooperative and "hovering." In contrast, since she did not take the time to chat with him upon her return home, he perceived her behavior as uncaring and disinterested.

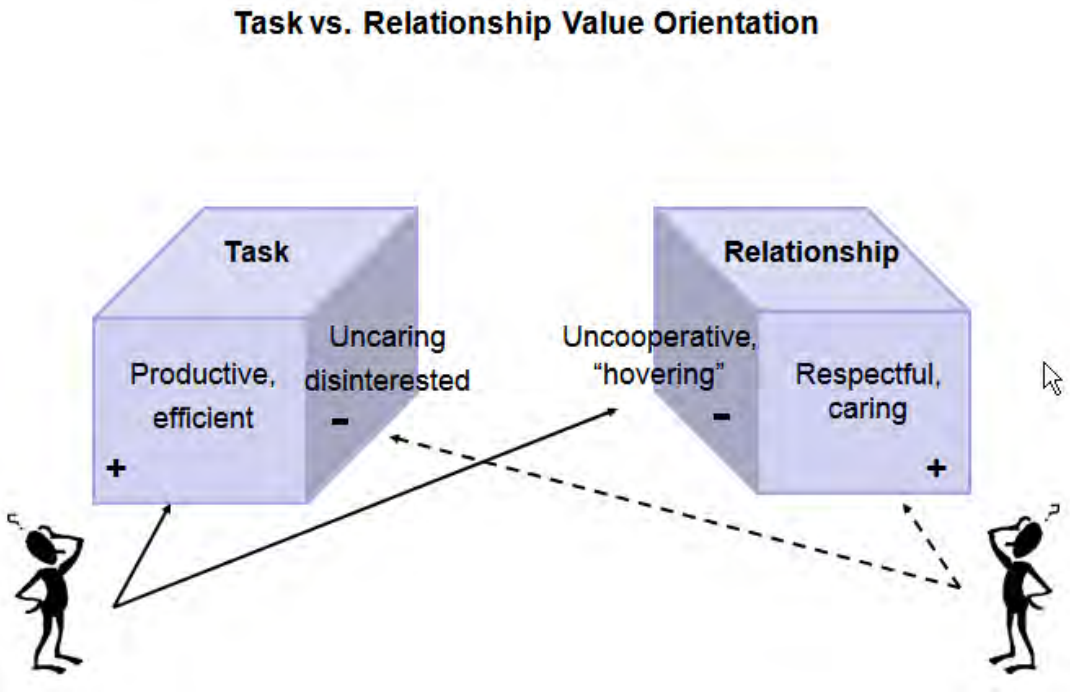


Figure 2

Neither the student nor the host parent intended to displease the other, but a lack of understanding of the motivation for the other's behavior has led to negative perceptions on both sides. The goal of this handbook is to bring to light differences you may encounter, generate understanding of these differences and practical tips for dealing with them so that both you and the participant may have a more enriching and enjoyable experience.

Religion

Turkey is a secular country, which means that most aspects of daily life and all aspects of state-run institutions are entirely separate from religion. Though 98 percent of Turks identify themselves as Muslim, Turkey operates on a western calendar, schools and offices do not close for prayer times, and religious attire is not allowed in schools, universities or government offices. For many citizens of Turkey, women's dress – particularly the headscarf – has become a symbol of the clash between secularism and religion in the country. There are also Christians, mostly Greek or Armenian Orthodox, Catholics and Jews in Turkey.

While the majority of Muslims in Turkey are Sunnis, there are also Shiites and Alevis, the latter of which are estimated to comprise a third of the Muslim population in the country. Unlike Sunni orthodoxy, which was taken from the Arabs, the Alevis evolved from the Shamanism of the early Turks in Central Asia.

Your student might not be religious, or might not know as much about Islam as you might have expected.

Though your student might not be a practicing Muslim, he or she may feel uncomfortable eating pork and indicate that it is due to religious reasons.

Even though our student was Muslim, he did not practice his faith or feel it was important to find a Mosque to worship. The only cultural edict he followed was not eating pork. **U.S. Host Family**

Our student was Muslim, but willing to eat pork and attend various religious services. **U.S. Host Family**

You may be surprised to learn that, even if your student is religious, he or she does not usually go to the mosque with his or her family. Attending services is not usually a family activity, and women are not allowed inside certain mosques. Your student, on the other hand, may be surprised to see that the church often plays a major part in social life in the U.S.

Even if your student isn't particularly religious, he or she will most likely have been influenced by some aspects of Islam. Similar to Christmas and Easter in the U.S., many Muslim holidays and traditions – the *iftar* dinner, which breaks the Ramadan fast, for example – provide an opportunity for families to eat and spend time together (see *Holidays* and *YES Cultural Tip Sheet* in Appendix).

We openly discussed our Christian religion and our student's Muslim religion and we both learned there were some similarities. We both learned a lot about each other's beliefs and became more comfortable as time went on to discuss why we do things the way we do and our student did things the way they were taught and believed. **U.S. Host Family**

Role of Religion in the U.S.

Just as the U.S. education system (especially at the high school level) is more than academics and is often the center of a student's social life, religious observance in the U.S. often includes more than worship. For families who are involved in a religious community, in addition to it being a center for their spiritual life, it is likely to be a place where social contacts are made by the entire family.

If applicable, explain to your student the role religion plays in your life – not just the worship, but the social and any service aspects as well.

While your student may be willing to participate in your religious community at some level it must be understood that he or she has come to the U.S. on a cultural exchange program and community members should not use this exchange as an opportunity to attempt to proselytize or convert the student. The family should respect the student's choice not to participate if that is his or her preference. Under no circumstances should a student ever be forced to attend religious services.

Please convey to any religious community leaders with whom your student may come into contact that no pressure is to be put on the student to convert. Encourage your student to let you know if he or she encounters such pressure from any source so you can address it directly with the individual/s involved.

Our student's family are secular Muslims. They celebrate the holidays in a social way but do not attend mosque etc. Her relatives do but her immediate family do not so much. One of the things she was surprised at was our use of the Bible and how it is handled so freely. She commented on this. Also, she found it interesting in how we go to church and worship as a group -- singing and socializing. She enjoyed that with us and even went to church youth gatherings and retreats and enjoyed the singing and activities. We always gave her the option to attend or not with us as we mostly do with our daughter. She sometimes would sleep in and other times would ask to be awakened so she could go with us on Sundays.

U.S. Host Family

She was Muslim, but not practicing. She followed her religious holidays at home, but was very open minded here and wanted to experience everything. She came to our church with us (Catholic) on several occasions.

U.S. Host Family

Communication

Developing good communication skills in English is an important part of an educational exchange program for Turkish high school students. Learning to listen actively and thoughtfully, being able to express themselves easily both verbally and non-verbally, being able to converse with a wide range of people, and being able to speak with confidence in front of a large group are all worthy goals. In order to help your student develop these skills, it is important to consider the contrasts in communication styles between the U.S. and Turkey.

Direct and Indirect

Direct communication is like "reading the headlines."

Indirect communication is like "reading between the lines."

In general, U.S. Americans consider themselves direct in their communication style. A **direct** style of communication is one in which the meaning of what is said is found primarily in the words that are spoken. We like to think of ourselves as "telling it like it is." In an **indirect** style of communication, the meaning is more often derived from factors other than what is said. Some of the factors that can influence the meaning could be:

- the perceived status of the speakers;
- the context of the situation;
- body language;
- level of familiarity. (The more familiar and comfortable the situation, the more likely a Turkish student will use a more direct style of communication.)

Kizim sana soyluyorum, gelinim sen anla!
I am telling you my daughter, in hopes that my daughter-in-law will understand.

Turkish students will tend to use a more indirect communication style than most host families use. They will be used to indirectly confronting people, for instance, addressing their concerns to someone other than the person to whom they intend the criticism. Your Turkish student may use the indirect style to avoid conflict and therefore "save face." This can easily be misinterpreted and may cause confusion and misunderstanding, unless it is discussed and an attempt is made to understand these different styles.

Our student was not a very direct type communicator whereas I am at times. Once in a while this caused problems, but none seriously. We often talked about misunderstandings and tried to figure out why they occurred. **U.S. Host Family**

When students first arrive they may feel inclined to be overly respectful in their communication with family, particularly with those they perceive of higher status, such as adults in the family or

in the community. They may not want to openly disagree. They could become sullen and resentful, but unwilling to discuss what has made them uncomfortable or offended them.

When we left a note on a pair of shoes, typically left <u>again</u> in the middle of the entryway, we got a sullen reply. Only later did we realize the offensiveness of this kind of direct note—viewed as us being too angry to tell him directly, rather than as we viewed it, an efficient way to take care of a small concern. **U.S. Host Family**

Indirect communication may make your student appear to be less than truthful, and may even be misinterpreted as dishonesty. Host parents may want to check with the school to make sure this is not also impacting their student's communication with teachers or coaches.

He was always following behind me, turning off lights and turning off any running water. Because he did not say anything, we did not understand that he was upset and frustrated by our "wasteful" use of resources. **U.S. Host Family**

It is important that U.S. host families approach Turkish students with a sense of curiosity about their differences rather than just "teaching" the student their way of doing things. Keep in mind that a Turkish student may be inclined to repress anger or hurt when faced with a criticism or when he or she feels misunderstood. The student may consider speaking up to be impolite. This however, may result in resentment and might explode at an unrelated time and be misunderstood by the host family.

You might find it useful to set aside some time to discuss the events of the past few days with your exchange student. In the view of each family member, including your student: *What was good and what was not so good? What worked and what did not?* Regular discussions will give you and your exchange student the opportunity to address concerns before they escalate into larger issues.

We could not understand her seeming over reaction to a simple request until we spoke with her and realized she was taking it as a criticism for her standards of cleanliness, not just the less complicated issue we thought we were addressing. **U.S. Host Parent**

Host families will want to listen carefully and assist their student in developing a more direct style as appropriate, in order for their needs to be more readily understood. This may need to take the form of direct coaching in the early weeks after arrival and also modeling the communication style that your family finds most comfortable. For instance, Turkish youth expect adults to encourage them to eat. They will expect to be asked several times before accepting food. They may be surprised that you will only ask them once (see *Family Life* and *Food and Mealtimes*)!

Turks are extremely polite and tend not to tell you what they need or really want. **U.S. Host Family**

It is the responsibility of the host parents and older siblings to be available, to listen, and to share, in order to facilitate communication with the student.

Attached Communication Style

Communication styles can also be described as the manner in which people speak. Turkish people have what is often described as an *attached* style of communicating. Though we just described how they use an *indirect* communication style with a lot of non-verbal cues and obscured meanings, they can also be expected to speak loudly, in an animated way with lots of gestures, and frequently interrupting others. Those who are communicating in that fashion feel it shows interest in the person speaking and their own engagement in the conversation. Many U.S. Americans may perceive this as argumentative, impolite and somewhat aggressive, and are generally not comfortable with it.

Language Ability

Students will arrive with a range of English language skills, from competent to struggling. It may take a host family some time to decide whether a misunderstanding is due to language ability, or a misunderstanding is due to being a teenager!

Communication can be a problem—either because of language difficulties or because they are a teenager. **U.S. Host Family**

Communication is extremely important. Don't underestimate the importance of helping your student put their language misunderstandings into perspective. For example, our student thought because she was a senior in High School she could order senior items on a restaurant menu. That can be frustrating until someone explains it and the student sees it's not their fault. **U.S. Host Family**

Particularly with an indirect style, your student may just nod and smile in agreement and not admit to having difficulty understanding what is being said. Your student may not even realize that he or she does not fully understand. Host families need to encourage and be patient with language learners, especially in the first few months, and realize that language skills will continue to develop throughout the student's stay in the U.S.

We played games, and our student said **Apples to Apples** ***really helped him learn the language.*** **U.S. Host Family**

Humor

Playful banter, affectionate teasing, comical nicknames and joking with friends and family members is very common amongst Turkish people. Many host families have indicated that Turkish students seem to share a similar sense of humor and that as language competency developed and as the student felt more comfortable, a delightful sense of humor emerged.

Her sense of humor did not show itself for about 4 months, until she was comfortable with us and felt that she would not offend us with her jokes.
U.S. Host Family

Disparaging jokes about homosexuality are more common in Turkey than in the U.S. and your student may need guidance in this regard in order to avoid offending others.

Non-Verbal Communication

Successful communication is not only a question of using the same language. Even with English language fluency, the Turkish student's preferred indirect style of communication may easily be misunderstood if the non-verbal cues are not recognized.

For instance: Turkish students will likely use lots of hand gestures—talking with their hands to express themselves, reflecting that attached style of communication. Even "yes" and "no" are frequently expressed in Turkey without words and can be confusing since the head motions are a contrast to what we might expect them to mean.

- A lifting of the eyebrow will mean "no."
- Add a tilt of the head up for emphasis of "no."
- An even more definitive "no" includes the eyebrow, the tilt of the head and adds a click of the tongue.
- To add more emphasis, all three are used in a more exaggerated manner, plus a scowl for good measure.
- In contrast, a lowering of the head will mean "yes"!

Taking the time to explain some of the cultural differences in gestures may help your student feel more comfortable and may help avoid misinterpretation. Most of the time the "offense" that your student might perceive from you is unintentional and is simply a result of another way of viewing the world. Your explanations and demonstrations of caring and interest will go a long way in helping your student to feel comfortable.

Expressing Affection

How touching and affection are appropriately expressed vary greatly from one culture to another, and even within those cultures. Turkish people are generally more physically demonstrative than are many U.S. Americans. It is not unusual for friends to hug, or hold each other close, such as walking arm-in-arm (see *Sense of Space*).

She missed the touching and more intimate physical contact among friends that is part of Turkish culture. We did try to hug her and be as touchy as we felt comfortable. **U.S. Host Parent**

Your Turkish student may benefit from a clear explanation of appropriate and inappropriate signs of physical affection. Standards of acceptability may vary between settings such as home or family, high school, community, and church (see *Sense of Space*).

Consider including local teens in the discussion to ensure that your student is receiving the most "up-to-date" information regarding behaviors with other teens. Such a discussion may also lead to talking about how homosexuality is perceived in the U.S., as well as in Turkey.

Turkish parents may show affection toward each other verbally (such as praising their spouse to third parties) or physically (by kissing on the cheeks, hugging, putting a hand on the other's shoulder or touching the other's arm).

Turkish children express affection to their parents by kissing them on the cheeks, by hugging, and by being respectful to them at all times.

The Turkish Language

Though many students may arrive with adequate English, their own language has a richness that is not easy to replace. The Turkish language is full of specialized terms of respect, meaningful proverbs, set sayings, and old religious sayings. English seems to have less of these, and your student may struggle to find the appropriate thing to say in an attempt to replace those.

It is impossible to replace a saying like this:

Bir fincan kahvenin kırk yıl hatırı vardır.
(A cup of coffee commits one to forty years of friendship.)

Or these words of respect:

Abla – older sister, used to show respect to a woman you know well.
Teyze – aunt, used to respect older women.
Ağabey or abi– older brother, and many variations, to show respect to a man you know well.

It would be helpful to let your student know how to address teachers, neighbors and adult family members.

Turkish provides lots of set phrases that provide easy responses for many situations. English has nothing comparable and could leave your student, at arrival, at a loss for having an appropriate response for common situations.

Afiyet olsun:	*May it give health.*	(Bon appetite.)
Elinize sağılık:	*Health to your hands.*	(Said to the cook at a meal, thanking for the food.)
Geçmiş olsun:	*May it pass quickly.*	(Said to someone not feeling well.)
Kolay gelsin:	*May it come easily*.	(Said to someone working or studying.)

Religious-based sayings are used in Turkish everyday vernacular and do not translate easily into English. Though they started in a religious context and still call on "Allah," these sayings are used regularly in everyday Turkish, whether the person practices Islam or not.

Maşallah: *Praise God.*

Often used with a knock on wood and pulling on the earlobe to ward off praise that might curse success or health. When someone praises the attractiveness of an infant, for instance, the response from the parent might include this phrase—ensuring that the praise is not going to cause the infant to become unhealthy.

Inşallah: *God willing.*

Used with hopes for something that is to happen. Frequently used with plans for the future.

Sensitive Topics

In all cultures, there are usually some topics that people are generally not comfortable discussing. For instance, many U.S. Americans would prefer to not discuss their salary or personal questions about their family or religion. Though many Turkish students seem to feel free to talk about most topics, there are some topics that can be very sensitive to them.
It would be helpful for host family members to learn the history and complexity of these topics in order to understand their student's -- possibly very intense -- reaction to them. In any case, it is important to keep in mind that it may be difficult for your young student to explain or defend his or her position.

Discuss the Muslim issue very openly. We told her never be ashamed of who you are that makes you* you*. The students at the school probably want to know more about her religion and culture. Also when there is an incident in the world especially related to Turkey, i.e., the Israel attack on the Turkish ship, discuss it. While it is not overt the kids do think about it and how it reflects on them and their religion. The same is true of any incident that concerns Muslims and terrorism. **U.S. Host Family**

The following are likely to be sensitive topics for your student: Armenia, Islam (see *Religion*), Turkish politics and reverence for Atatürk (see *Overview*), Israel and Judaism, European Union membership, Turkey's loss of over 45,000 people to domestic terrorism since 1984 and the U.S. presence or influence in Turkey and the region.

Turkish Daily News is available online, in English, and can help to familiarize you with current events in Turkey.

Many host families will be surprised by the amount of knowledge and interest their Turkish student has about U.S. politics and policies. They will follow current events and are accustomed to sharing their perceptions on these openly.

It will be important to help your student understand what topics may be sensitive to U.S. Americans.

Sense of Space

Our sense of space is not something that we generally stop to consider; it is one of those cultural characteristics “below the surface of the water" (see *What is Culture?*). As U.S. Americans, if someone stands too close to us during conversation, we usually step back without thinking. When we enter an elevator, we face the doors instead of facing the others in the car. When we take a seat anywhere in public, space permitting, we will generally choose a seat that has an open space on either side. These choices, conscious or not, are influenced in great part by the culture in which we grew up. This section describes differences related to the U.S. and Turkish concepts of space that may have an impact on your hosting experience.

Population Density

Turkey is slightly larger than the state of Texas with a population of 74.8 million people, compared to 24.3 million in Texas! The overall population density of Turkey (roughly 236 people per square mile) is slightly less than three times that of the USA making for closer quarters on average. However, about 70% of the population lives in the urban centers of Turkey, with about 12.7 million living in Istanbul alone. This translates to a population density about 2650 people per square mile, which is similar to the population density of New York City or Los Angeles. The population density of other urban centers in Turkey ranges from about 200 to 400 people per square mile, still well over two to four times that of the average in the U.S.A. Imagine what daily life would be like if you lived in such close proximity to so many other people, buildings, cars, etc.!

Ev alma komşu al
Don’t buy a house, buy a neighbor.

Living Space

The vast size of the U.S. and relatively large amount of physical space available to the average U.S. citizen contribute to our norms and beliefs about space today. Many things in the U.S. are bigger than they are in other countries, including Turkey, ranging from the size of our food portions to our refrigerators, washing machines, closets and cars!

Home ownership is viewed as a sign of success in Turkey. The better off the family, the more elaborate the interior design. Most urban Turks live in concrete and steel apartments. However, among the upper class, there has recently been a move away from congested cities toward suburban developments, where single-family houses and townhouses are more common.



Typical homes in Turkey

Most Turkish students from urban areas (Ankara, Izmir, Istanbul, and Antalya) will be used to apartments with two, three, or four bedrooms depending on the family's income and the number of children. Typically each child has a bedroom, plus the parent's bedroom, a living room (and perhaps an additional guest room or dining room), a kitchen and one or two bathrooms, and one or two balconies.

The kitchen and/or the living room are the center of the Turkish home. Turkish homes are typically open for guests, who are welcomed in for tea and chat, dinner, or to just "stop by." Turkish people are well known for their hospitality. They like to host guests and feel obliged to make them comfortable. As a visitor enters a Turkish home he or she will be greeted by whoever can get to the door fastest followed by everyone else at home. It would be considered impolite not to go to the door to greet the guests, unless you are sick or are unable to do so for some reason.

In Turkey, the family home remains the home for the children throughout their lives. A Turkish young man or woman would likely live with his or her parents until marriage. An adult child would not consider it living "with" their parents because it is forever their own home! When a young couple buys a home, their parents often help them to do so and it is considered to be another "family" home (see *Family Life*).

The majority of Turkish students come from Istanbul or other large, urban centers of Turkey. As such, they will be used to living in much closer proximity to people and things than the majority of U.S. host families who live in suburban or rural areas.

Turkish students may have a hard time gauging the time (and fuel) needed to travel from point A to B, especially in small towns or rural areas. This may result in some surprising but truly sincere questions such as, "Can we drive to Disneyworld?", when you live in Minnesota.

Personal Space

Exchange Students by the end of the year!

Turkish Students

U.S. Students

The size of our **"personal space bubble,"** or the comfort zone between one person and another, differs by culture and is also influenced by our gender and relationship to others.

Turkish people of the same sex generally have a much smaller personal space bubble than U.S. Americans of the same sex.

It is common for same-sex individuals in Turkey to be very close to each other and even touching when talking, sitting or standing. This behavior would not be indicative of any romantic interest in each other. While this level of closeness is becoming more common among non-romantic, same-sex peers in the U.S., here it is generally reserved for opposite-sex peers who share a romantic relationship.

Explain to your female student that it would be common for a male friend in the U.S. to offer his female peers a friendly hug upon meeting or a supportive hug if she were feeling down. This kind of hug does not usually mean that he wants a romantic relationship with her.

Remind your student that being very close to, touching or leaning on same-sex peers is not very common among U.S. teens and may make their new U.S. friends uncomfortable.

To avoid misunderstandings or misperceptions, take time to observe with and point out to your student what is acceptable/unacceptable personal space behavior. This can also be a fun activity for host-siblings to do!

Space among Family Members

The distance between family members in Turkey (both of the same and the opposite sex) tends to be closer than in the U.S. However, as with any cultural comparison, we must allow room for differences among individuals and families (see *Generalizations and Stereotypes*). Students coming from more conservative backgrounds, especially females, may feel less comfortable with physical contact with family members of the opposite sex (see *Family Life*).

We are a fairly physical family (hugs and kisses) so there really wasn't a lot of change there for her. Be open to the fact that many cultures are more physical than we are. **U.S. Host Family**

Again ask your student their personal preferences, likes and dislikes and find out if there are cultural taboos. Be respectful of differences and talk about them. **U.S. Host Family**

Your student's comfort level with handshaking, hugging, personal distance, and other touching will vary depending on his or her past experiences and expectations. Ask your student for guidance.

Shared Space

Another key difference between the U.S. and Turkish culture that may impact your hosting experience is the degree to which people from each culture generally like to create boundaries and establish ownership of material things, as well as space. **In the U.S. we tend to have a sense of high territoriality**, in other words we are more comfortable in a situation that allows for wide personal space, and we are more concerned with delineating ownership of space and materials things and establishing boundaries. **Turkish people, on the other hand, tend to exhibit low territoriality behaviors**, meaning they tend to be comfortable in what we would consider close quarters and are generally less concerned with establishing and maintaining boundaries (with the exception of those who believe in boundaries between genders based on religious doctrine).

What Do These Differences in Space Mean in Practical Terms?

- At first your student may feel overwhelmed by the sheer size of our buildings, cars, classrooms and the space in between them. It will likely be tiring for him or her to navigate the distance between people and places.
- Your student will likely be surprised by the size of your refrigerator, the amount of groceries stored in your kitchen and/or pantry, and by the abundance of non-perishable, prepackaged foods available in the U.S.
- Your student may use the personal items of other family members without asking as this would not be considered improper back home in Turkey.
- You may find your student "hovering about" and in "in your space" more than other family members would be, especially if your student is not sharing a room with a sibling.

- Your student may feel lonely, especially in the first days and weeks after arrival and seek out others in their rooms.
- Experiencing this relative excess of space may result in your student feeling isolated and/or excluded from the family, even though this is not the case.

Our son's concept of personal space was definitely smaller than ours; he would move in to look over a shoulder, for example. And, we noticed he walked into friends' houses without waiting for someone to open the door to let him in… We made jokes about personal space issues, like turning and asking "Can I help you?" **U.S. Host Family**

Be sure to explain to your student which spaces or things are for communal use and which are not. Remind all family members of the cultural differences at play in order to avoid perceiving the other's behavior in a negative light.

Talk to your host son or daughter early on about the need for family members to occasionally have time alone and suggest that the family come up with a humorous word or phrase that can be used when "space" is needed. Having a shared understanding of these differences and inserting humor into the communication around it will help de-personalize the situation and may take some of the sting out of telling your student that you or your child need some time alone.

Family Life

Yalnız taş duvar olmaz
A lonely stone won't make a wall.

Learning about your Turkish student's home and family life will help you to better understand the world from which your student has come and what he or she has left behind in order to spend a year with your family and your community. The areas of contrast between U.S. American and Turkish families that are discussed here will give you some clues about the adjustments that your hosted teen will be making in the first months with you.

In the U.S. it is generally viewed as a positive sign when a young person leaves his or her parental home after high school or college, and is living independently, financially and otherwise, from his or her parents. Young people tend to choose their own friends, their own classes in high school and college, where to live, etc. In Turkey other family members would likely have more of a say in these types of life choices and decisions. In addition, Turkish parents would generally enjoy and expect their children to live with them for a much longer period, often until their children are married.

Turkish students are likely to feel burdened by the multitude of choices they are expected to make independently at school and in the home (what classes to take, what clothes to wear, what to have for lunch…). Guiding them in their decision making early on in the experience will not only help relieve some of the stress related to the initial period of adjustment but also make them feel better integrated into the family.

Both U.S. and Turkish families can be considered very "child-centered" -- that is, parents are focused on their children. Your student may be surprised, however, by the level of involvement of American children and their parents in extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, dance, and language lessons. In Turkey, students are more focused on academic pursuits, with time for few other activities (see *Education*).

***Everything revolves around the family in Turkey. Sometimes it is hard for our young lady to comprehend why we may only see relations who live 10 minutes away only once a month*.** **U.S. Host Family**

We did find our student spent quite a bit of time at home. She did spend time with her friends but always put family first. **U.S. Host Family**

The family is the dominant source of *belongingness* for both males and females. Individuals within Turkish society are generally loyal to and have close relationships with their families (see *Generalizations and Stereotypes*). It is considered desirable to have grandparents and other relatives around, and that is generally the case except in the largest cities. Regardless, relatives do travel back and forth and stay closely connected. It is not unusual for young adults to help their younger siblings with school expenses, or to help elderly relatives with their needs.

Some indications of the importance of family:

- Turkish people always need to indicate the names of their parents on registration or other official forms throughout their own adulthood.
- When a couple becomes engaged, even in modern Istanbul, both families participate in the ceremony—very much a joining of two families.

Ask each member of the family to spend some "quality time" with your student on a daily basis. If your family has a very busy schedule and/or you do not often share meals together, make an effort to have family time at least once a week in the home. Play cards, board games or other activities that allow for conversation and fun.

Roles within the Family

Just as the traditional male-dominated family is becoming less common in the U.S., so are the traditional authority structures becoming less pronounced in the urban areas of Turkey. Since 2002 Turkish men are no longer considered the legal head of the family and this allows women greater legal equality. According to the reforms of Atatürk, men and women are considered equal.

However, expectations for parents, children, males and females still exist within the Turkish family and may be a significant (though perhaps subconscious) influence on your student's expectations and behaviors. Men maintain a protector role, and even young men as they reach adolescence may move into this role relative to female family members. Mothers and daughters generally have a very close relationship. Your female student will likely miss that close relationship with her natural mother. Both male and female students would be used to having their mother ask about their day at school. All students might be pleasantly surprised if their host father showed an interest in their day!

In the beginning our student was not as comfortable with men. She really opened up when she found out that in the U.S. men and women are more equal. The girls tend to be very close to the female members of the family. She had no problems with teacher or peer relationships either.

U.S. Host Family

You should not be surprised when your exchange student expects "caring behavior" from you and often explains in minute detail what he is planning to do. On the other hand, your student will feel insecure and left alone if you do not show interest in what he is doing or if you don't help him find things to do in his free time. **U.S. Host Parent**

You might want to try these approaches to showing your student that you care:

- Ask questions about their day and show interest in their activities.
- Do something unexpected. Turkish students like surprises!
- Learn some Turkish words or ask about their customs.
- Surprise your student with a Turkish dish.

Mothers and Fathers

The Turkish mother may be considered the "ruler" of her household and she (and the rest of her family) considers it to be her responsibility to dote on her family (including waking them) and to assume all responsibility for household chores. It is possible that your hosted Turkish student may arrive with the mindset that "Mom runs the house, manages the money, cooks, irons, serves, and educates the children to assume responsibility." Turkish fathers, on the other hand, generally fulfill the role of the breadwinner and are usually not responsible for household chores or cooking.

You should also know that in a Turkish family, even if things are discussed freely between child and parent, normally it is the parents who make the final decision. Therefore, most Turkish students come from protected surroundings. It is only when they go to the university that they have more freedom. **U.S. Host Family**

One big difference is that I think our student's mother did more for him than would be considered normal in the USA. He was unable to prepare his own food or keep his room picked up, as I believe all of these tasks were done for him. **U.S. Host Family**

When my exchange student first arrived she was totally shocked at how my daughter (only child) interacted with my husband and I. In her family she would never think of talking back, being sarcastic or arguing in any way with her parents. It really disturbed her but she visited with her liaison about it and then sat down and talked with me about it. Communication was the best thing -- we've had a great time with our student. We've come to love her like family. **U.S. Host Family**

To avoid misunderstandings, host families have found it beneficial to discuss everyone's family values at the beginning of the exchange year, perhaps referring to information on the student's application. You may find it helpful to take this opportunity to explore how responsibilities are shared in your student's Turkish home. In this gentle way you will begin to get a clearer understanding of your student's past experience and his or her possible expectations within your family. You can then create a bridge to explaining your family's system and the reasoning behind it.

Grandparents

You may notice a difference in the way your student views the grandparents in your family. Turkish grandparents are generally honored and often play a large role in the family. They may be responsible for childcare due in part to the high cost of daycare centers. Unlike in the U.S., retirement homes are rare and it is generally assumed that an elderly parent will come to live with a married child.

She absolutely doted on her American grandmother. Elderly are to be revered. **U.S. Host Family**

Social Life

Typically the Turkish family spends their leisure time and weekends together. Common family activities include watching television at home together; dining out with family, friends or neighbors; picnicking; visiting friends or family; or attending movies. It is common for teens to spend their school vacations with families and relatives. Births, weddings, and funerals are important occasions for the extended family to get together to share joy or offer support to each other.

This might sound very much like an American family spending time together, but the difference is in the actual family activities. In Turkey, the family activity centers on sharing a meal together and being with family. The focus is on the "being" together. In the U.S. the activity itself is often the focus. It may be an activity outside the home such as camping, biking, playing or watching sports, or it may be indoor activities such as playing video games, board games, and watching TV or movies together. American families tend to be more about "doing" together while Turkish families tend to be more about "being" together.

Your Turkish student may be pleasantly surprised to find that family activities in the U.S. include active sports or outdoor activities—and that American fathers and mothers actively participate.

Visiting

Turkish people are famous for their hospitality. Guests, even unexpected ones, are always welcomed and offered refreshments. Turkish people strive to make their guests feel comfortable and in turn guests strive to bring a pleasant presence to the home when they come as visitors by bringing a small gift, such as candy, fruit or flowers. To make sure guests are always welcome, homes are kept very clean and tidy -- just in case someone comes to call.

The Home and Household Routines

In most Turkish families, one does not enter the house or apartment with one's street shoes. People wear slippers at home and provide a nice supply for guests to wear in order not to bring in the dirt from outside, to ward off any cold from the typically tile or marble floors and as well as to respect the efforts of the person who cleans the home. Upon returning home, Turkish students will change out of their school uniform and adults often change out of their street clothes into something more comfortable.

Don't be surprised if your student takes off his or her shoes upon entering your home. This would be the time to explain what is expected in your home with respect to shoes.

The definition of a clean home in Turkey is different than in the US. The cleaning done in the U.S. (vacuuming, using the washer and dryer) is already done on regular days by the Turkish mom, often with her daughter's help. In addition, Turkish families often employ a cleaning lady who comes every week or every two weeks for an extremely thorough cleaning. Windows are cleaned inside and out, floors wiped by hand, and carpets are washed by hand. The cleaning lady may also do laundry, iron, cook, and perhaps take care of children, particularly if the mother works outside the home. Household helpers do not usually live in the house unless there is someone in the family who is very old or sick and needs continuous care.

Turkish moms are fanatical about keeping a tidy home, so it's not unusual for them to pick up after their kids. Having a spotless home in Turkey is a high priority. **U.S. Host Family**

Household Rules and Chores

Every host family has rules that help their family run more smoothly and to provide protection, guidance and care for all members. As a newcomer to your family, and especially someone coming from another culture, your student will not be able to guess what the rules are. In fairness to your student it will be important for your family's rules to be explicitly stated, explained, and revisited. Hosted students often express that they really began to feel like part of the family, rather than a guest, when they were given "chores" like their siblings.

Our family is balanced in who is in charge. Mom and Dad. Hers was more male dominated but Mom and grandma were primary care givers. Our child needed to be told to do chores, it didn't come naturally. She was good at them once told and learned what to do and when but needed a lot of instruction. **U.S. Host Family**

We were a family that didn't think we had a lot if any rules, chores etc. We found out differently because our own child just does it and is low maintenance. Our exchange student is not that way. She was content to let things be done for her until we incorporated her into what was happening in our household. Make them feel at home and welcome and then put them to work is the best suggestion. They are not a guest, they are a family member. **U.S. Host Family**

Chores are an area where the contrast between American culture and Turkish culture is clear and obvious, and thus where conflicts can easily arise. Part of it is semantics and part is cultural expectations.

"Chores" in Turkey are serious, elaborate tasks that have been mastered over years. For example, if a student says, "I can't cook," that is because he or she is imagining being responsible for an elaborate, non-microwave cooked meal, something which the student hasn't been taught to do. By keeping in mind this very big cultural difference and the reasons for it (Turkish parents do everything possible to support their child's academic success and avoid assigning any responsibilities which would take time away from studying), you may find it easier to empathize with your student's point of view and feelings and to enlist his or her cooperation.

If you are feeling like your student has "an attitude," that comes across as a sense of entitlement, chances are this is a sign of a cultural difference in expectations between children and parents. In a calm moment share with your student how you are feeling and the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that American parents expect from their children.

Be patient with the student. Always keep in mind that these kids are a long way from home. They need a lot of guidance….Be as clear and direct about your expectations as you can. Do not assume anything. Remember that this student knows nothing of the culture within your home so you need to let them know what will be considered appropriate in your house.

U.S. Host Family

Turkish youth are used to assuming specific responsibilities within the family. Don't hesitate to tell your student from the beginning of his stay which rules exist within the family and which tasks he is expected to perform. For example, he can help with setting the table, washing or drying dishes, washing his own clothes, cleaning his room regularly and other chores around the house, just like those you would expect your own children to do. Performing these kinds of tasks is often a way to develop communication within the family and provides the student the opportunity to practice the new language.

AFS Turkey Staff

Laundry

In Turkey the typical washing machine is much smaller than an American-made machine and few homes have dryers. The wet clothes are hung on the line to dry rather than being put in a clothes dryer.

It will be important for you to provide simple, clear and specific instructions on how laundry is handled in your home – including how to use the washing machine, the clothes dryer, how often sheets or towels should be washed, location of the clothes line or drying rack, and how to handle hand washables.

Dogs and Pet Related Chores

It will be necessary for you to pay particular attention to your student's application and what he or she indicated about pets. Some students may be unaccustomed to or afraid of pets. If your student seems unaccustomed to pets, it will be helpful to teach him or her how to behave with and how to avoid or control the animal.

Our student had to adjust to a playful untrained puppy. He was not used to these animals inside, stealing gloves and socks, and just being such a huge part of the family. We worked on training them both at the same time! He learned to love the dog, and wanted to bring him back to Turkey!

U.S. Host Family

In Turkey dogs are most often acquired for the purposes of protection as a watch dog or for special use by hunters or police. They are not commonly viewed as domestic pets, nor treated as a family member as is often the case in the U.S. Your student may be uncomfortable with or scared of dogs in the house for these reasons. Students might request that the dog not be permitted to enter their room. Normally by the time the student prepares to return to their home country, their comfort level with and perception of the dog has changed.

If you have a dog and your student is uncomfortable with it, please discuss ways of addressing the issue with him or her. Solutions in the past have included keeping the dog out of the student's bedroom. Understand that your student may not want to pet your dog and would prefer, at least initially, not to be assigned chores associated with dog care, especially walking or cleaning up after it.

See the *YES Cultural Tip Sheet* in the Appendix if you have a family dog and your student prays in the house.

Sense of Time

In the U.S. we tend to go to great lengths to schedule our time and stick to deadlines. Time here is viewed as a tangible and limited commodity; it can be wasted, spent, saved and earned. We value promptness and being on time for an appointment is a sign of respect for the other person's time. The fact that time is a significant value for U.S. Americans makes the value of efficiency important in our culture. For example, solving a problem quickly and successfully is considered a sign of competence.

In contrast, Turkish people tend to view time as unlimited and flowing and much greater flexibility exists around deadlines and schedules. Attending to relationships with others is more important than being punctual (see *Culture and Perception*), and cutting a conversation short in order to be able to make another meeting on time could be seen as a sign of disrespect.

In the U.S. we are generally more future-oriented while people from Turkey tend to be more oriented to the present and past.

People from future-oriented cultures tend to look forward to and plan for the future whether looking a few days, months or years ahead. This doesn't mean that they are not concerned with the past or present but that planning for the future is generally of greater concern than the past or present. This view of time contributes to the value of optimism as reflected in the U.S. proverb. "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." This optimistic view of the future is also a reflection of the belief that we can actually control the future.

Her sense of time is a little more "flexible" but she has adjusted well.
U.S. Host Family

They have difficulty understanding strict schedules, especially appointments. The attitude is so what we are only late by 10 minutes. Our student walks slower, takes her time about getting information and finishing her chores.
U.S. Host Family

It seemed that our student was used to a much slower pace than we were moving at. **U.S. Host Family**

This past/present orientation toward time is reflected in the common use of the phrase "Inşallah" or "God willing" when referring to events in the future in Turkey and a belief that one's fate or destiny is predetermined by God.

As stated earlier, in the U.S. American culture, being on time is a sign of respect for others. Last-minute cancellations are generally not OK. In many towns in the U.S. there is little to no public transportation so families must plan their outings in advance in order to accommodate all members. Schedules are set and last-minute changes are generally not welcome because they will impact and delay multiple people. If we are going to visit someone, we usually arrange a date and time well in advance, even with close family members and friends.

We learned to wake him up earlier, make him get ready sooner, and give him a time frame to which we stick by and if he is not ready to leave when we are, we have left without him. **U.S. Host Family**

We did need to have some conversations about timing when it was critical (as in leaving the house for school/work in the morning) and give warning ahead of time when we needed to be ready by a specific time.
U.S. Host Family

Explain to your student that last-minute cancellations are generally perceived as a sign of disrespect in the U.S. and he should notify someone as soon as possible if his plans change.

Remind your student that if she should be late for class, an appointment, or a meeting with friends, a quick apology followed by a brief explanation would be appreciated. Give her an example such as, "Sorry I am late. I had to wait for my brother/couldn't find my backpack/missed the bus, etc."

In contrast, most Turkish students come from the urban centers of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Adana, where widespread public transportation is available. If someone needs a ride on short notice it is not viewed as a problem or an inconvenience to others. He or she can either take public transportation or ask a family member or friend for a ride. Last-minute plans and cancellations are generally OK and dropping by friends or family at any time is acceptable.

Instruct the student to let you know his transportation and other scheduling needs a week or more in advance whenever possible so that the family members will be able to schedule these events in.

Some host parents have reported that their Turkish student is "very last minute" but in the same breath they have questioned whether this is more of an individual characteristic or one common among all teens. We find, however, that host parents of students from Northern European cultures, for example, do not generally express similar views. This perception is therefore consistent with the notion that in Turkey, people tend to be focused on the "here and now" and are less likely to anticipate and plan for events to the extent that we tend to do in the U.S.

Our student has a difficult time organizing his time and often his "plans" never fully developed. Is this cultural? Perhaps, perhaps not.
U.S. Host Family

Especially in the beginning, help your student choose 1-2 extra-curricular activities so that he is not overwhelmed by the choices that exist. Turkish students from more rural areas may need more encouragement to participate in extracurricular activities than those from large cities (see *Family Life).*

If you don't already have one, post a family calendar where your student and other family members can note and view their and each other's appointments. Use this as a tool to help emphasize to your student the need to plan ahead and to remind him of situations in which promptness is important.

Food and Mealtimes

Turkey has a long, rich history of cuisine that is greatly influenced by its geographical location on the Mediterranean, as well as by its proximity to the Middle East and North Africa. Turkish people share a love of fresh fruits and vegetables, and the use of lemon, olive oil, and tomatoes with their neighbors. Mint, parsley and dill are herbs that are frequently used in recipes containing both meats and vegetables. Food customs, spiciness and traditions vary throughout the country, and there are regional cuisines as well as contrasts in food choices and availability between urban and more rural homes. You should explore your student's food traditions, likes and dislikes.

It is unlikely that your student will have much experience in the kitchen since this is usually considered the mother's role (see *Family Life*). Most teenagers will not be used to preparing a meal for themselves or for their family. However, they might look forward to learning to prepare some Turkish recipes along with you, and learning how to prepare some American favorites.

Be open to trying a lot of very good food.

He missed kabob and pilaf, but it wasn't until later in the year that we realized this when we started cooking together… Try cooking together earlier in your year. Look up recipes online and try them for your whole family. We discovered new foods that we like and will continue to eat. Communication -- the most important! **U.S. Host Family**

You might want to suggest that your student bring along some favorite recipes so he or she can help shop for and prepare those dishes. Turkish families often grocery shop as a family activity so this might be a pleasant reminder of home and a comfort to him or her.

You may also enjoy searching online with your student after he or she arrives to find some recipes you would like to try together. If there are any Turkish restaurants in the area that could also provide your student an opportunity to introduce you to Turkish cuisine.

Fruits and Vegetables

With a mild climate, Turkey has a long growing season and many fruits and vegetables are available fresh year-round. Fruit is often served as a snack or a dessert. Your student will likely be used to having fresh fruit available as well as a variety of vegetables. Most American fruits

and vegetables will be familiar to them, though they may miss some of the common fruits and vegetables that are less often served in the U.S., such as pomegranates, eggplant, and fava beans -- all staples of Turkish foods.

In Turkey vegetables are frequently served in olive oil at room temperature, or they are incorporated into meat dishes. A serving of vegetables served plain with no additional flavoring will be a bit unfamiliar for them.

Bread
Bread is a staple of Turkish mealtime. The typical bread is similar to Italian bread -- oval-shaped with a crease down the middle. A Turkish teenage boy might consume an entire loaf each day. Bread is eaten with or without butter during meals, or with butter, jam or honey at breakfast.

Meat and Fish
Servings of large portions of meat are uncommon; however, Turkey is the land of *kebab*s: fish, chicken, beef, and lamb are quick-roasted over an open fire and served on a skewer. Many Americans are familiar with *gyros* sandwiches. This is known as *döner kebab* in Turkey where it originated, and is a popular, widely available dish. Seafood is a popular menu item near the Turkish coast where many of Turkey's larger cities are located.

Instead of using large amounts of meat, many Turkish main dishes incorporate grains or legumes such as *bulgur* (cracked wheat), lentils, chickpeas, and a variety of dried beans and other fresh vegetables. These might contain no meat at all, or just a small amount of meat as a flavoring.

Dairy Products
Yogurt is a popular food; however, it is usually not eaten with fruit but with meat and vegetable dishes, or with pilaf. A favorite dish is a ground meat and spinach dish that is served with pilaf and a dollop of yogurt.

Ice cream and cheeses will be familiar to your student. The most familiar cheese for them, often eaten for breakfast with bread, is similar to what we know as *feta* cheese. The Turkish name is *beyaz peynir*—white cheese. Other Turkish cheeses are not widely available in the U.S. but your student may find some cheeses that are tasty to them. Milk-based puddings, such as rice pudding, are a common dessert.

Baklava
One of Turkey's most renowned foods is *baklava*. Fairly well-known in the U.S., it is a familiar dessert to all Turks. Its rich sweetness perfectly complements the strong coffee and tea that are also part of Turkish cuisine. Though it is a bit of a challenge to make the first time, you will find it not at all impossible to work with the paper-thin sheets of dough. Since baklava is easily available for purchase in Turkey, your student will not likely have ever made it at home; however, he or she will thank you for attempting this challenge. Recipes are available online.

Water and Other Drinks

Tap water in Turkey is generally considered unsafe to drink so people depend on bottled water, often having large bottles delivered to their homes for consumption.

Your student might not be used to drinking milk or water with a meal. Most Turkish adults do not drink milk with meals though children may drink hot or cold milk for breakfast. A more typical drink at home would be juice, water, a soft drink, or the traditional drink—*ayran*, a watery yogurt drink.

Turkish students will be surprised if you are able to drink water from every faucet and will be reluctant to do so unless you encourage them that it is safe. (Or course, only if it is safe at your home!)

Inform your student of the water quality in your home, school and region.

Drinking tea or coffee throughout the day would be common practice among many Turkish teenagers. Turkish coffee, the traditional coffee drink of Turkey, is served in tiny cups, usually sweetened but without milk. Today many Turkish people regularly drink instant coffee, often with milk and usually sweetened.

Drinking beer with friends is increasingly common among urban teenagers in Turkey, and sometimes it is accepted by their parents. Drinking other alcohol is not common. The legal drinking age in Turkey is 18. Turkish students will find it unusual and uncomfortable to be with students or adults who frequently abuse alcohol.

Table Manners

Turkish families generally will gather around a small table for the evening meal. Reaching for food, salt and pepper, and eating out of a common salad bowl are typical, so do not be surprised if you notice these behaviors. Typically people eat in the European style, holding the fork in the left hand and knife in the right, and will eat more foods (such as pizza) with utensils whereas you might choose to use your fingers.

Some U.S. table manners that Turkish students may find a bit shocking and even rude:

- Having pets at or near the table (see *Religion*).
- People chewing with their mouths open. (Imagine the school cafeteria!)
- People putting their feet where food might be placed -- like a coffee table.

In Turkey, you refuse the first or second time before you accept food or an invitation. Here he missed out on eating a couple of times until he figured it out. **U.S. Host Family**

"No" means "maybe" at a Turkish table. It is part of Turkish hospitality to offer food several times. It is considered rude to decline the first offer, but it is not impolite to decline the next offer/s since this will be interpreted as being polite and just saying "maybe."

You may need to offer seconds to their Turkish student multiple times, so that the student doesn't go hungry in order to be polite.

Meals

Eating out is infrequent for most Turkish families, with little use of fast food and most food prepared in the home from fresh ingredients. Serving portions are typically smaller. With the family sitting together around a small table, the food in the center is easy to reach and share.

Breakfast: As in our country, many Turkish teenagers do not get up early enough to enjoy a full breakfast. If they listened to their mothers and got up in time, their breakfast might consist of bread, jam or honey, a boiled egg, olives, cheese, tea or coffee. (In Turkey, "toast" generally means a fried sandwich like a panini, rather than a toasted piece of bread for breakfast.)

In Turkey our student had tomatoes, olives, cheese and bread for breakfast -- here we have Eggo's, cereal, toast and fruit in the mornings and on weekends may have a bigger meal of eggs, etc. Of course, they are here to learn our ways and culture and our student did just that. She changed her eating to the more unhealthy, fast paced American way. I know she missed her Turkish food. We learned some of the dishes and made them.

U.S. Host Family

Lunch and Snacks: On school days, lunch is usually light and is eaten at school. A snack is eaten when students arrive home mid-afternoon. Snacks might be a sandwich or a piece of fruit. As with their counterparts around the world, Turkish mothers encourage their children to choose a healthy snack—and the children take every opportunity to reach for the heavily sugared and salted unhealthy ones!

Dinner: The evening meal, often eaten as late as 7 or 8 p.m., would be the major meal of the day, generally prepared in the home (not fast food or take out), and the family would eat together. Traditionally this means the mother prepares a full meal with multiple dishes, including dessert and tea, for the family. Rice is more commonly eaten than potatoes or pasta, but all three are frequently eaten in most homes.

Most Turkish participants will not initially be comfortable with "helping themselves" to snacks or preparing their own meals. If it is the custom in your home for members to "help themselves" please explain what this means to your participant and emphasize that doing so reflects that he or she is very welcome in your home. (This same behavior in Turkey would send the opposite message to a guest or visitor.)

Your student may be reluctant to speak during mealtimes as the custom in Turkey is to wait to do so until everyone has finished eating. You may need to point out to your student your custom and encourage him or her to participate in the conversation.

Food Restrictions and Islam

Many Turkish students may not have been exposed to pork products in any form, though pork products are available in urban gourmet markets. Some students may look forward to trying pork while others may find the thought of pork completely unappetizing and unacceptable.

Be sure to discuss with your student any Islamic dietary restrictions he or she may have and whether they will be fasting during Ramadan (see the *YES Cultural Tips Sheet* in *Appendix*).

Teenage Life

Turkish teens are, in many ways, like many other teenagers and they are coming to your family at a time when they question everything and have an answer for everything. While Turkish teenagers may be used to a large degree of independence outside the home due to the easy availability of public transportation, their relationship with their parents is likely more dependent than is typical in the U.S. (see *Family Life*).

In the U.S. teens are most often expected to engage in extra-curricular activities and they are generally comfortable choosing how to spend their free time, initiating and participating in both individual and group pursuits. For many, this is actually a necessity as one or both parents are not available until after the end of the work day. Many U.S. teens also have part-time jobs after school and/or on the weekend.

In contrast, the "job" of most teens from Turkey is to study and they do so seven days a week and there are few extra-curricular activities as we know them. Therefore your student will likely not be used to so much "free time", i.e., time spent doing anything other than studying. In addition, due to the group-oriented nature of Turkish society, any free time they do have is more likely to be spent with immediate and/or extended family members or close friends (see *Family Life*).

At home much is done for them and their primary job is fun and school work. Transportation is always a problem. If they cannot get somewhere by mass transit their families will be there to drive them to and from places. They expect us to be on call also. Here in America as you know it is much different. People work miles from the home and most families have two working parents. I also find that the kids are more reluctant than some of the other kids we have hosted from other counties to ask school mates for rides etc.

U.S. Host Family

After School

Students may not attend schools in their neighborhoods, as "better" schools may be in other neighborhoods. Consequently, due to rush hour traffic a student may spend several hours of the day in the school bus, especially in Istanbul.

Once the student arrives home, there is a good chance that mom is home and has prepared a snack. After some rest time, there is homework to do, or exams to study for till dinnertime.

Dinnertime is usually around 7 or 8 p.m., which is when the whole family is most likely to gather at home at the end of the day. A typical student is unlikely to go to bed before 10 or 11 p.m. From dinnertime until bedtime depending on the neighborhood, the student may hang out with friends, invite friends/neighbors over or stay home. Most parents expect to know where their children are and when they are to return home (see *Food and Mealtimes* and *Family Life*).

Some students are involved in extracurricular activities, such as sports, music, theater, etc.

These activities can be either at school or in private clubs or institutions. Unlike in the U.S., students focus on one activity (rather than a different one for each season) and practice it throughout the year. Sports clubs vary according to city and town. Soccer, tennis and sailing are examples. Turkish high school students will know about American sports such as baseball and American football (and possibly softball); however, most likely they have only seen them on TV or in movies.

Before your student commits to joining a sports team, ensure that he or she is aware of the time commitment, practice and game schedule.

Regardless of what other sports your student is excited about or involved in; he or she is likely to be a fan of one of the three major soccer teams. Besiktas, Galatasaray or Fenerbahçe. As a host parent, if you are even slightly interested in sports, a little bit of information on one these teams may come handy as an ice-breaker, conversation starter and even material for serious debates if you are up for it!

Getting Around

Turkish participants may not be used to the constraints of living in a car-dependent society. Due in part to the high costs associated with buying, maintaining and fueling automobiles (gas is priced around $11 per gallon), Turks are far less dependent on cars than Americans are – even those who live in small towns and villages have access to public transportation, usually in the form of buses or minibuses (called *dolmuşes).* As a result, your exchange student might be used to having a great deal more independence and mobility than public transportation in your town can provide.

America is the land of no public transportation. We are in small town Texas and just got some regional public transportation. Our student came from a family very similar to ours. Very little learning curve. **U.S. Host Family**

Even though US parents are used to shuttling their children around, most other families use public transp. We would encourage other hosting families to encourage their students to try to get around themselves a little.
U.S. Host Family

Our student came from a city where he had the freedom to takes trams and trains and buses at anytime to anywhere. It was a huge adjustment for him to rely on parents and friends for transportation. **U.S. Host Family**

You may find that your student isn't familiar with common transportation safety practices and laws in the United States. If your student is riding a bike, for example, you may want to explain the safety benefits or laws regarding wearing a bicycle helmet as helmets are rarely worn in Turkey. You may also be surprised to notice that your student doesn't automatically put on a seatbelt in the car. It is common for drivers and passengers in Turkey to drive without wearing a seatbelt. You may need to remind your student that he or she must buckle up while in the car.

Encourage the students to be independent from the start. Take the bus, find rides with friends, car pool. Give them weekly chores and responsibilities. Get involved with after school activities at the start of school.

U.S. Host Family

When your participant arrives, inform him of all of his transportation options. Will he be riding a bus to school, or is he close enough to walk? Can he use public transportation to get to the library, a fitness center or the mall, or will he need to be driven? Is there a bike he can use to get around town? You should, of course, discuss your schedule and make it clear that you will not always be available to transport him. Getting to know each other's schedule will be imperative if public transport isn't common in your area.

Peer Relationships, Dating and Sex

The way your student interacts with peers will depend not only on his or her natural temperament, but also on his or her family background and the kinds of friendships he or she formed at home. In Turkey, girls tend to form extremely close bonds with a few of their peers – they often have the same best friend(s) from their pre-school days through their adult years. Additionally, it isn't unusual for girls to hold hands or sleep in the same bed with their best girl friends – customs which are not be as common among female friends in the United States (see *Sense of Space*). Boys, on the other hand, usually have a larger group of friends and are also more physically connected to their friends – for example, it isn't unusual for Turkish boys to walk down the street with their arms linked. It is not unusual for girls and boys to be close friends, with the boy assuming a role similar to that of a brother. Turkish students are likely to miss these close peer relationships at the beginning of their exchange experience.

Encourage your host child to become active at their school, to step outside their comfort level and try new things even if they are not great at them.

U.S. Host Family

Remind your student that being very close to, touching or leaning on same-sex peers is not very common among U.S. teens, especially for males, and may make their new friends uncomfortable.

Turkish boys and girls get to know each other by hanging out at school and then going out in groups, particularly in urban areas. Nightlife for a Turkish teen may involve going out in groups until the early hours of the morning or even later—the typical hours for eating and socializing in Turkey, particularly in urban areas on weekends, are much later than in the U.S. (see *Food and Mealtimes*).

American teen social life will be different from what your Turkish teen is used to. "Partying" in the U.S. sense of the word is not common in Turkey. Your teen may benefit from a discussion about how to behave in social situations with American teens.

In Turkey, if a couple goes out together without friends (i.e., to the movies, to dinner, to a school dance), it is perceived as the beginning of a serious relationship by the couple themselves as well as their peers and families.

If a Turkish boy wants to have a girlfriend, his parents usually don't mind. However, male family members tend to be protective of the females. Therefore, in traditional families, the females may try to hide the boyfriend's existence from the males in the house unless marriage is proposed. As in the U.S., the average age for marriage in Turkey is getting older, as many people wait to marry until they have completed their education and the mandatory military service for men.

The majority of her friends were girls, and any time she would spend time with her guy friends (not boyfriends) she would say, "Just don't tell my dad, because he'll worry." **U.S. Host Family**

It is considered more acceptable for teenage boys to engage in sex in Turkey than for teenage girls. It is important that a woman "maintain her honor", i.e., the girl is expected to maintain her chastity. Because of this, your student may not raise concerns about inappropriate sexual advances to you or to her exchange program representative. Similarly, birth control is not openly discussed in Turkey—girls usually get any information they know from their friends (although health classes including sexual education components are beginning to be taught in schools). If a girl becomes pregnant, it may be considered an embarrassment to her family.

Soon after the student's arrival, the host mom should try to create a comfortable environment, making it clear to her Turkish daughter that she should feel free to discuss these issues with her. You may wish to initiate this topic as a follow up to personal safety information provided prior to departure and during orientations in the U.S.

Turkish teenagers have developed expectations about teenage dating and sex in the U.S. from TV and movies. Male exchange students coming to the U.S. may see this as an opportunity to experiment with sex, since they believe it will be readily available. For this reason, it may cause some confusion for a male exchange student if a girl invites him to her house – particularly if no one else is home. Girls may be frightened about the expectations of U.S. teenage boys, and therefore may be uncomfortable with any touching and the U.S. style of teenage dancing.

Also, some Turkish students may not be familiar with the concept of a "date." Therefore, a goodnight kiss at the end of a date might make a Turkish teenager believe that they are boyfriend/girlfriend. The situation might be embarrassing to the student if his or her date didn't take the occasion so seriously.

If you allow your student to invite a friend of the opposite sex to your home, you should clarify whether they are allowed to be together in the student's room, as well as your standards for appropriate behavior.

He was awkward and demanding about girls—rather than take the time to develop a relationship. **U.S. Host Family**

She was a modest person, and once she went to a school dance. She was shocked at the behavior of many of the students, particularly the dancing, and never went to another one. **U.S. Host Family**

Our young lady was somewhat reluctant to go out one on one with a young man. Don't push them with the opposite sex. Just have open communications about the American mores and values compared to theirs. If it happens it happens. ***U.S. Host Family***

Personal Care and Health Matters

Temizlik ruhun gidasidir
Cleanliness is the food of the soul/Cleanliness is next to Godliness.

As we look more closely at personal hygiene it helps to keep in mind the realities of teenage growth and development—indeed any adolescent, from any culture, may still need reminders and guidance with personal hygiene.

Appearance

Most Turkish teens dress casually and wear Western-style clothing similar to that of American teenagers. Both boys and girls normally wear jeans, shirts, t-shirts and sweaters. European fashions (including tight jeans for young men) are especially popular among young people. Depending on the customs in your area, you may need to discuss appropriate attire with your participant.

Turkish students will be used to their mom or the housekeeper providing them with ironed clothes, even including their t-shirts.

My host mom ironed everything for two reasons. One, because we didn't have a dryer so after hanging them, we'd iron to get to get the wrinkles out. Two, she claimed that it kept things cleaner and more sterile like the socks and underwear. I found them to be quite clean!

U.S. student hosted in Turkey

Hygiene and Grooming

Turkish culture places a strong emphasis on cleanliness. However, you may observe that your student maintains a daily routine and style that is different than what you are used to when it comes to hygiene and clothing. Many of these differences (frequency of bathing and frequency of laundering clothes) become more understandable when we learn more about Turkish culture and the reasons for those behaviors. Host families often find it helpful to talk diplomatically early on with their student about any grooming matters which might present difficulties.

Turkish students typically take long showers two or three times a week rather than quick daily showers (like many Americans) and may wear clothes more than once as long as they are not spoiled or smelly. **Turkish Returnee**

Removal of body hair is natural part of cleanliness for both Turkish males and females. In addition to shaving, body waxing (for females) and trimming or armpit hair (for males) may be done.

A Turkish girl (particularly if she is from an urban area) may be accustomed to frequent visits to beauty salons to get her hair done or her eyebrows waxed.

Our male Turkish student shaved his pubic hair. He told me that he did and that it was to be 'clean'. I found pubic hair in the tub and couldn't understand why he had shaving cream when he had no whiskers yet. **U.S. Host Family**

Bathroom Practices

Turkish bathrooms generally have all-tile walls and floors, as well as a drain in the middle of the floor. This means that your student may not have ever thought about the effects of splashing water on your bathroom rugs, walls, or wooden counter tops, or about your reactions to finding a wet bathroom.

Showing your student where to hang wet towels and how to tuck the shower curtain into the tub will help him or her to keep your bathroom in order.

If your student is a practicing Muslim who washes before prayer *("abdest"),* for more information please see the *YES Cultural Tip Sheet* in the Appendix.

It will be important to explain to your student that he or she should dispose of the toilet paper directly into the toilet. In Turkish bathrooms it is customary to dispose of the toilet paper in the waste basket because the plumbing is unable to accommodate it.

Turkish toilets include a water spout at the back of the toilet bowl which acts as a bidet and can be turned on and off as necessary.

Every toilet has a water source to wash your bum with -- either plumbed into the toilet or separate with a water pitcher at hand or they have a bidet -- they do think that toilet paper is not adequate and I have to agree -- their way is better -- they are probably told to get used to toilet paper only when coming here. **U.S. student hosted in Turkey**

Providing flushable toilet wipes near the toilet and making them available to your student to take along to school may be appreciated. Toilet seats with water spouts are also now available in the U.S. (Costco).

Students may be surprised at the lack of privacy (floor to ceiling stalls) in public restrooms.

A Special Note to Families Hosting Girls

Your female student's needs regarding rest/activity, privacy, and diet, as well as the kinds of personal hygiene care products she will need during menstruation, may differ from those of U.S. teen girls.

Turkish females, particularly teenagers, use pads, not tampons.
U.S. Host Family

A Turkish female teen will generally not divulge if and when she has her period. She may only say "I have a stomach ache."

Host moms or host sisters will be the most likely persons to talk with their Turkish daughter about her personal care and needs during menstruation, as well as to provide the details about where to buy hygiene-related articles and where and how to dispose of used products.

Health Matters

It is important to listen to, observe and be respectful of your student's attitudes, beliefs and customs regarding healthy behavior, especially if they are different than yours.

An example of a simple difference is that it is very common for Turkish parents to warn their children not to go outside with wet hair (after shampooing). Keeping one's feet warm may also very important for your student.

Illness and Medications

Generally a Turkish student will not go to a doctor or take medication unless the illness is serious. Instead your student may expect you, as the host mom, to "nurse" him or her by providing hot soup, ensuring extra sleep and extra attention, just as his or her own mother would likely do.

Turkish people tend to take fewer over-the-counter medications than Americans because they are wary of them and their potential side effects. Over-the-counter medications that are easily available in the US are only available at the drug store in Turkey and are very expensive in comparison to the same drugs in the U.S.

Girls might feel uncomfortable being cared for by a male doctor, so please ask how they would feel about doing so.

Find out from your student what medications your student has brought with them and express your need to be told when your student is not feeling well and is self-medicating.

School and Education System

Most Turkish parents value education to the extent that the child's primary role is to be a good student.

The following section highlights the key differences between the U.S. and Turkish education systems that will have a considerable impact on your student's experience. For a general description of the Turkish education system, please refer to the Appendix.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Today in the U.S. teachers are trained and strive to appeal to a variety of learning styles by incorporating experiential learning opportunities and a variety of teaching methodologies into their lesson plans. They often incorporate group discussion and projects that allow students to learn from each other and encourage lively debate and critical thinking. One's academic success is determined by a number of factors including class participation, homework, test scores, etc.

In the Turkish secondary school, teaching most often takes the form of lecturing and learning is primarily achieved through repetition and memorization. Academic success is measured primarily through testing. Because of this and because the quality of teaching varies greatly among secondary schools in Turkey, many families rely on private tutors to ensure that their children have the knowledge and information they need to pass grade level and university entrance exams.

Turkish primary and secondary school students are not usually encouraged to scrutinize or to think critically and many Turkish students initially find it a challenge to do so in their U.S. high school.

Teacher/Student Relationship

Teachers are highly respected in Turkey. As a general rule, teachers are not addressed by their first name or a nickname out of respect for their authority and age. Students can raise their hand to make or argue a point in an indirect way, but they would rarely argue or contradict a teacher directly. In Turkey it is not the norm to know teachers on a personal level outside of class as students often do in the U.S.

My student was amazed that teachers here actually seemed to like students and did so many extra things with them outside of the school day.

U.S. Host Family

U.S. teachers who are unfamiliar with exchange students can misinterpret behaviors and ways of approaching homework and classroom interaction. For example, they could interpret the student as being shy and disinterested but in actuality the student may not be comfortable speaking with the teacher or raising his or her hand.

Contact your student's guidance counselor and teachers early on to get progress reports and address any misperceptions that may be hindering his or her integration and/or success in the classroom.

Turkish class subjects are chosen by the school, not the student. Teachers move from class to class, while students stay in the same room all day with the same group of students. Strong, long term relationships develop between students because of the amount of time they spend together in school.

A Typical Day at School

School hours vary from school to school however most commonly there are eight classes starting around 8 am, lasting till around 3 pm. Each class is 45 minutes long with 5-10 minutes breaks and a longer lunch break.

Students wear uniforms; they go to school with the materials necessary for the classes of that day as lockers are not common. Unlike in the U.S. they are assigned a classroom and a seat at the beginning of each school year and are not expected to change classrooms throughout the day except for classes that require special resources such as art, physical education or laboratories. Teachers visit the classrooms, give their lectures and leave. For the most part, students in the same classroom share a common daily schedule.

Explain the routine for gym class before your student's first day at school as he or she may feel uncomfortable changing and showering (being naked in front of others) for gym class. Discuss with your student possible ways to handle this situation.

Turkish students will not be accustomed to choosing their own courses and will need help from the host parents to determine their schedule.

Your student may have difficulty adjusting to having many classes with different classmates in a day since they are use to having been with the same group of students every day since the 1st grade. Explain the importance of taking the opportunity to introduce themselves to everyone.

In Turkey school spirit is demonstrated through different aspects of each school, for example the success of the school in the national rankings, its reputable alumni, its location, etc. School teams are common but not as competitive nationwide as they are in the U.S. Basketball and volleyball are the most common sports in high schools. The best way to find out about what it is that gives the school its spirit is to ask your student. He or she will most likely be delighted to tell you.

Exams and Homework

Exams are common and usually announced in advance. There may be quizzes and oral exams unannounced depending on the teacher. Take-home exams or assignments with distant deadlines are not so common. Homework also varies according to the teacher, but commonly there is homework every night for each class. Assigned group work is not as common as it is in the U.S.

Cheating is a serious disciplinary issue in Turkey and consequences are serious. Having said that, depending on the capability of the teacher in maintaining discipline in the classroom and the character of students, cases of collective "helping" among students are not unheard of. Some of these instances may be reminisced by classmates as entertaining stories years after graduation as the high points of creativity and collectivism.

Inform your student of the sensitivity around cheating and plagiarism in your school and what the consequences are.

Turkish students are generally not accustomed to doing incremental work. If your student is expected to complete any large or long-term projects, he or she may need frequent reminders of the importance of not waiting until the "last minute" to do the bulk of the work (see *Sense of Time*).

Parental Involvement

Turkish parents are expected to be involved in the student's academic success. The schools require that one parent is appointed as the official parent "veli," who is responsible for the student's progress and is expected to work in collaboration with the teachers from first grade until the end of secondary education. This parent is expected to see and sign the report cards at the end of each semester and attend teacher-parent conferences organized at least once a semester. The school officials may contact this parent anytime during the school year, in case of a concern related to the student's well-being, academic progress or discipline.

Tutoring

If a student is struggling academically a parent may hire a tutor. Tutoring is common and relatively less expensive than in the U.S. It is usually done by university students for additional income. There is another, more professional, type of tutoring available for university preparation.

Studying for University Entrance

The typical life of a Turkish teenager isn't terribly different than the life of an American teenager (see *Teen Life*). The situation dramatically changes direction when the student approaches the end of their high school years and begins to think about going to university.

In recent years, a great number of new universities opened in Turkey; however, the supply is still far from being enough to fulfill the demand. Only 20% of all students who want to enter a university can be placed in a university program. This shortage of supply creates enormous competition. The current solution to this is a national examination in which the highest scoring students are admitted.

The marathon for university entrance preparation starts as early as two years prior to high school graduation and typically includes being trained by costly professional tutors several hours a week and attending expensive private institutions called "dersane" on the weekends and most holidays. The focus of education shifts from learning academic knowledge to test preparation. A successful and ambitious student answers thousands of test questions, and excels in speed and theoretical knowledge. During this time all extra-curricular activities usually come to a stop due to lack of time.

Some Turkish students who go on exchange programs do so after they are done with both high school and the university entrance exam so as not to interrupt this preparation process. If your student has not graduated from high school in Turkey, he or she would appreciate your help in choosing appropriate classes and then getting any necessary documentation.

Holidays

Holidays in general, as well as birthdays, are often a time when students feel especially homesick. Your student may miss the closeness of his or her natural family or the celebrations that have always been a part of his or her life. Your student may also be looking forward to experiencing U.S. holidays and ways of celebrating them with you. For example your student may know about Christmas, Thanksgiving or Halloween but will most likely be unfamiliar with traditional U.S. ways of celebrating them. Following is a description of the major Turkish Holidays. For additional information, please see Appendix C.

Şeker Bayramı (Sweets Holiday)

In Turkish, bayram means holiday. The word *şeker* means candy or sugar. *Şeker Bayramı* immediately follows the month of Ramazan (Ramadan), which is a one-month period of fasting, when the devout will refrain from eating or drinking between sunrise and sunset but the end of the fasting period is celebrated by everyone by eating lots of sweets. In practice, it is like a combination of Thanksgiving and Halloween.

Kurban Bayramı (Sacrifice Holiday)

Kurban Bayramı is the other major religious holiday of the year. The visiting ritual of this *bayram* is the same as in the *Şeker Bayramı* with less focus on candy and more focus on delicious kebabs or other meat dishes. The meat, which is an expensive item on the shopping list, is distributed among the family, neighbors and the poor.

For both *bayrams*, new clothes are bought, especially for children, and worn. Family visits start from the morning. Younger members of the family visit the older ones first. To pay respects, they kiss the older one's hand and wish *İyi Bayramlar* (Happy Holidays). Grandparents and *bayrams* constitute a huge part of a child and teenager's annual income as the act of paying respect is usually returned by a gift; ranging from a pair of socks to significant amounts of money.

These holiday celebrations last four days and allow time off from the usual tasks of life in order to socialize, remember and enjoy time with family and friends. Some people who live in the big cities take this time for a get-away trip.

When are these Holidays?

The dates of these religious festivals change according to the lunar based Islamic calendar and thus occur 10–11 days earlier each year.

Your student might feel the need to call home during religious *bayrams*.

Ask your student about the significance of Turkish holidays and how they might share the celebrations with you, such as preparing a special dish.

New Year

The evening of December 31st is the time to celebrate the New Year. People may spend this night together in their homes and have a specially prepared dinner and exchange gifts with family and close friends or may go out to celebrate. It is common to see decorated trees in homes, shops and streets decorated with lights and Santa Claus (Noel Baba) inviting potential customers into stores to do their New Year shopping.

Christmas in Turkey commonly goes by unnoticed; however Turkish Christian communities and foreigners residing in Turkey do celebrate it.

Turkish people do not generally exchange gifts on Christmas, but rather on New Year's Eve. Make sure you let your student know the customs around gift giving related to any holiday that your family celebrates.

"Thank You" and gift cards are not commonly used in Turkey. If these things are important to your family, be sure to share this with your student.

Students are unlikely to be familiar with the concept and importance of RSVPs in the U.S. If your student is invited to an event that requires an RSVP, please explain what is expected of him or her in this regard.

St. Nicholas, the original Santa Claus, was born in Patara, Turkey and has a church dedicated to him in Demre, Turkey.

Noel Baba at the square in the front of the church in Demre

Appendix

Appendix A - References and Further Reading

Althen, Gary. American Ways. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc., 2003

Asitimbay, Diane. What's Up America. San Diego: Culture Link Press, 2005

Bayraktaroglu, Arin and Bayraktaroglu, Arn. Culture Shock! Turkey: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette. London: Cavendish, Marshall Corporation, 2009

Brosnahan, Tom. Bright Sun, Strong Tea Turkey On the Road with a Travel Writer. Concord, MA USA: Travel Info Exchange, Inc., 2005

O'Hara-Devereaux, Mary and Johansen, Robert. Global Work: Bridging Distance, Culture and Time. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1994

Dindi, Hasan, Gazur, Maija, Gazur, Wayne M. and Kirkkopru-Dindi, Aysen. Turkish Culture for Americans. Boulder: International Concepts Ltd., 1989

Kim, Yuen E. The Ying and Yang of American Culture. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc. 2001

Samovar, Larry A, Porter, Richard A., McDaniel, Edwin R. Communication Between Cultures. Boston: Wadsworth, 2010

Lanier, A. R. (revised by Davis, J. C.) Living in the USA . Boston : Intercultural Press. (1973/2005)

Denislow, Lanie, Tinkham, Mary and Willer, Patricia. *U.S. Culture Series: Introduction to American Life*. New York, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2004

McPherson, Charlotte. Culture Smart!TURKEY. London: Bravo Ltd., 2008

AFS-YES German-Turkish Handbook 2009

AFS Turkey Welcome Booklet 2009

AFS Handbook for Host Families of German Students 2008

AFS Handbook for Host Families of Ghanaian Students 2009

Tevhid-I Tedrisat Kanunu, Turk Egitim Tarihi, Prof. Yahya Akyuz. "UNDP 2007 Data" Human Development Report Turkey (date) Ankara Universitesi Egitim Bilimleri Fakultesi Yayinlari, No 160 http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_TUR.html

Yildirim, Ali. "Gender role influences on Turkish adolescents' self-identity." Adolescence, Spring, 1997. Nov.1, 2010 http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2248/is_n125_v32/ai_19417328/

(E.T.) Hall's Cultural Factors; http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/hall_culture.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commemoration_of_Atat%C3%BCrk,_Youth_and_Sports_Day

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Sovereignty_and_Children%27s_Day#Turkey

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_day#October_29th_in_Turkey

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victory_Day#August_30_in_Turkey

http://egedeatelye.blogspot.com/2009/09/bayram.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_space

http://www.allaboutturkey.com

http://www.culturegrams.com/

http://www.uop.edu/sis/culture/File/sec1-1-1h1.htm

http://www.kultur.gov.tr (Ministry of Culture and Tourism)

http://www.mfa.gov.tr (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

http://www.goturkey.com

http://www.turkishembassy.org (Embassy of the Republic of Turkey)

http://www.helloturkey.net/holidays-alt.html

Appendix B - YES Program Overview

The YES Program evolved out of a generalized recognition that public diplomacy efforts had been neglected in many countries around the world for many years and that the effects of this came into stark focus in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001. The Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau of the U.S. Department of State, along with the US exchange community, recognized the importance of youth exchange as a key component of renewed commitment to building bridges between citizens of the U.S. and countries around the world, particularly those with significant Muslim populations.

This resulted in appropriations committed by Congress in 2002, followed by a call for grant proposals later that same year. Like-minded high school exchange organizations in the U.S., including AFS- USA, the Program of Academic Exchange (PAX), American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) Foundation's Academic Year Abroad (AYA), ACES (American Cultural Exchange Service) and CIEE; as well as Mobility International worked together with AFS Partner organizations in several countries, including Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Turkey to provide a large number of scholarships within a compact time frame.

By August 2003, the first class of 53 YES students from Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia arrived, followed in January 2004 by 20 Malaysian YES students. In the 2004-05 academic year the ranks of YES students grew to 163 participants, this time adding students from the Philippines. In 2005-06, the number of YES scholars was 288, growing to over 400 in 08-09.

Currently PAX, AIFS/AYA, ACES, CIEE and AFS-USA each host a portion of the YES students in communities across the U.S.

YES Selection Process

Students who participate in the YES Program are selected in an open, merit-based competition and reflect a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds within their own countries. Turkish YES participants undergo a very rigorous selection process and most are from Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and the surrounding areas.

Students who are accepted are provided a full scholarship to study in the U.S.

The YES Program also welcomes students with disabilities and works with US organization Mobility International to help support students on-program.

AFS Selection Process

Roughly half of the Turkish participants hosted by AFS-U.S.A. have not received YES funding. These participants also undergo a rigorous selection process; however there is less socio-economic diversity within this group. Non-YES Turkish participants tend to come from urban, middle to upper-middle class families.

Appendix C - Additional Information about Turkish Holidays

The following table lists both national and religious *bayrams* (holidays) during which schools and government offices are closed. Additional information about select holidays follows.

When	Name of the Holiday
April 23	National Sovereignty and Children's Day
May 1	Labor and Solidarity Day
May 19	Atatürk Commemoration, Youth and Sports Day
October 29	Republic Day (Anniversary of the Declaration of the Turkish Republic)
November 10	National Mourning Day
January 1	New Year
changes every year	*Şeker Bayramı* (Sweets Holiday)
changes every year	*Kurban Bayramı* (Sacrifice Holiday)

April 23rd - National Sovereignty and Children's Day

Children's Day has been celebrated annually in Turkey since 1920 when it was first established and presented to the children of Turkey by Ataturk. The children get two days off school, while the rest of the country gets only one day off school/work! There is a fun, international children's event organized by the Turkish national television (TRT) every year. Children from all over the world come to Turkey, hosted by the government and volunteer families of their Turkish peers, and present their folkloric dances. To see a live broadcast of this event, check out this link http://www.trt.net.tr/23nisan/tarihce.aspx?dil=en

May 19 - Atatürk Commemoration, Youth and Sports Day

An annual holiday that commemorates the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence. During the course of his term as president, Atatürk himself proclaimed May 19 as "Youth and Sports Day." Throughout the year the selected young people from every school prepare for a sports show. The best of these events is performed at a major stadium in the city with the government officials are watching and TV stations broadcasting live. The youth of the nation get two days off school, while the rest of the country get only one day off!

Oct 29: Republic Day (Anniversary of the declaration of the Turkish Republic)

On October 29, 1923, the Turkish constitution was amended to dissolve the Ottoman Empire and to create the Republic of Turkey. Republic Day is celebrated throughout Turkey, and government offices and schools close for the day.

Kurban Bayrami

An Islamic religous holiday. *Kurban* means 'sacrifice' in Turkish. According to the story Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was going to sacrifice his son Ismail (Ishmael) when God (Allah) sent him a ram to sacrifice instead. See Wikipedia's Abraham entry for a more detailed story of the origins of this holiday.

Appendix D - Turkish Education System

Despite sporadic Westernization movements especially in the military schools, up until 1924 the education system in Asia Minor was mostly religiously governed. The modern, secular and centrally governed Turkish education system was established in 1924 under Atatürk's leadership. The years following were a time of reforms on the path to becoming a modern society. For example, the "alphabet reform" of 1928 is just one example but is enough to put the gigantic change in perspective. In order to make reading and writing more accessible to the masses, the entire nation switched from the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet designed especially for the Turkish language. The transition was achieved within a short time frame, and with the help of public education programs the literacy rate increased significantly from 20% in 1935 to 89% in 2007.

Contrary to the highly non-centralized U.S. education system, the Turkish education system is very centralized and is controlled by the Ministry of Education.

Overview

Turkish public education is divided into four stages: preschool, primary education (eight years, free, compulsory, coeducational), secondary education (four years, general technical and vocational high schools) and higher education (four years, universities and vocational schools).

Specialization starts in the 10th grade where students pick one of four study areas: Turkish-Math, Science-Math, Social Sciences or Languages.

Entrance to good high schools is very competitive. The most desired high schools are called *Kolej* (College*), Anadolu Lise* (Anatolian High School) and *Fen Lise* (Science High School) as they offer high-level technical training and strong second language education which are highly valued skills for the work force as well as for success in the university entrance exam. Anadolu and science lise are state funded and kolej are private. For a complete schematic of schools and more information, see www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2002ing/apage29_48.htm

Unlike in the U.S., most universities are public and free. However, as a result of low supply and high demand, the access to a university education in Turkey is extremely competitive and requires intensive preparation. During this time families provide the financial resources for the expensive and intensive preparation courses and tutoring.

Grading System

Grades are out of 100 points, 45 is the lowest passing grade. There are two kinds of recognitions for successful students each semester: *Teşekkür* (Appreciation) for grade point average between 70 - 84 % and *Takdir* (Congratulations) for a grade point average between 85 - 100 %.

Grading System					
0	1	2	3	4	5
0-24	25-44	45-54	55-69	70-84	85-100
Fails	Fails	Pass	Medium	Good	Excellent

Appendix F – YES Cultural Tip Sheet

The information presented below is a general guide to understanding some of the cultural roots of behaviours that may be displayed by students from YES countries. This information speaks only to overall trends and will not hold true in all circumstances, especially since the cultures represented in YES are so varied. This guide will hopefully be helpful in attempting to understand the underlying causes of some misunderstandings and provide a point of departure for starting a conversation, when issues arise.

TOPIC	CULTURAL INFORMATION	POSSIBLE SUPPORT ISSUES	SUPPORT ADVICE
RELIGION	Even though many YES students come from countries that have large or majority Muslim populations, there are other students who are Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Jewish, etc. Some students are very devout and religiously observant while others are not practicing. (Please also refer to the YES cultural handbook on differences regarding religious practices and following of religious rules which may differ greatly from country to country).	Diet: Practicing Muslims are not allowed to eat pork or consume alcohol; Hindus do not eat beef; many Hindus are vegetarians In many religions, meat has to be prepared in a certain way prescribed by the religion (Halal foods/ Kosher foods)	Diet: Be mindful of dietary needs; discuss and look up ingredients in dishes; if a student does eat something forbidden, it is ok, but may need to stop once the mistake is discovered. Some host families choose to avoid eating the type of food that is forbidden; some offer different kinds of foods so that their host son or daughter can avoid the forbidden foods, while enjoying many of the same dishes his or her host family does.
	The month of Ramadan is a time during which many Muslims fast from sun up to sun set (no food or drink). This special month is based on a lunar calendar and therefore does not correspond exactly with the solar, Gregorian calendar. This year 2007, Ramadan Sept. 13-Oct. 12.	Fasting during Ramada for Muslims may mean that they do not participate in sports or feel left out during family meal times; swimming can be an issue; if participating in sports, not drinking water may be an issue	Fasting is common in a number of religions in some form. Some families choose to participate in fasting with their students as a way of experiencing a new cultural through their hosting. Students may be excused from participating in sports during Ramadan.
	Prayer is an important aspect of the religious life of practicing Muslims, who will generally pray five times each day, at specific times, which are	While the prayers typically take no more than several minutes, finding a quiet and clean place	

	religiously-dictated. Many religions require specific levels of modesty in dress or specific types of dress. In the case of Islam, there is a wide array of interpretation of "modest dress" but many observant Muslims feel that head covering for women is essential and many would include the covering of legs and arms for both men and women as essential elements of modesty in dress. Again, there is a widely varying interpretation among the religiously observant Muslims about what is required. In Islam, the saliva of dogs is to be avoided, as it is seen as unclean.	for prayer can sometimes prove challenging, especially the noon prayer, which takes place during the school day. Ablutions: practice of religious cleansing (basically, of the face, hands and feet) before prayer can result in wet floors Some people not used to seeing women who cover their hair, will find the practice awkward. The head cover will not stop a student from participating in normal family and school life (with the exception maybe of joining a coed swimming team in some cases). Some students who wear the head covering might feel somewhat rejected by their peers in their schools because the head covering is unusual to see in most U.S. high schools. Students may be afraid or reluctant to live with dogs Many religiously observant students would strongly prefer not to touch dogs. Some may not realize themselves that the prohibition is actually against the saliva of the dog and would not necessarily preclude them from, walking the dog for example. However, it is the case that the religious root of the aversion to dogs is also compounded by the very practical consideration in many countries from which the YES students	Praying does not have to be done in a mosque or temple; a private space can be provided; it is helpful to find out the direction Mecca is and not to disturb the student while praying. Many schools allow the students to use a corner of a room designated for "study hall" or a school counsellor's office. Since wet floors in a bathroom may be seen as quite OK in the context many students are coming from, explanation of expectations regarding dry floors and using towels to soak up any water left on the floor would help them meet expectations in the host family's home. Stepping inside the bathtub, rather than using the sink for the ablutions can help a lot. Students who use head covering make the decision to wear a veil on their own and will not view it as subservient (as is often interpreted in the West). They see the head covering as an essential element of their religious observance and are not embarrassed by. A frank and open conversation about their religion and the part the head covering plays in their observance can help to demystify it and even lead to some good discussions about what "modest" dress may mean to different communities. Keep the dog out of the student's room and don't expect the student to pet the dog; this does not mean the student cannot live with a dog; many students come to like their host family's dog and overcome that fear.

		hail, that a great number of dogs are, in fact, dangerous because they are generally used as guard dogs or are strays prone to biting. Going to church or mosques/ participating in host family's religious services	Students can participate in religious services of host family; there is nothing wrong with attending a different religious service; however, host families should not force a student to attend church if they feel uncomfortable doing so.
SOCIAL LIFE AND GENDER ROLES	Many students come from more hierarchical societies where respect of elders is stressed and fathers may be dominant. They may also be used to segregation of males and females. These societies stress dependence on others and doing many things as a group, not as individuals. People are very socially minded and often have social gatherings. Relationships are extremely important and saving face is a major concern. People can be very spontaneous and live in the here and now.	Students may not be used to being independent and doing things on their own. Female dominance may be difficult for them. Touching of members of the opposite sex may be considered inappropriate whereas touching of same sex friends may not be an issue. Public appearances can be extremely important and there is a difference in public vs. private behaviours. Strong reliance on friends and families may result in what could be considered excessive communication with family and friends. Spontaneity can be interpreted as lack of planning or not being on schedule.	Understanding of these differences as well as an explanation of these differences are a first step. Modelling by elders or advice from friends could be very helpful. Giving students time to adjust and be mindful of differences in touching and space differences is helpful. Knowing that reliance on friends and family is very important and gaining trust is a prerequisite for building a relationship. It is important to know that relationship building may be slower than in the U.S. It is based on helping each other and sharing secrets, not on doing activities together. By helping someone and doing things for them, you show that you care for them.
COMMUNICATION STYLES	Students are generally used to more indirect communication styles. That means they will not directly state what they think but will expect the listener to decipher the message and	The indirect way of communicating and not directly stating what they really need, think, or want can lead to many misunderstandings - from confusion to a perception that the student is "lying" or "manipulative". For example, a	Know that what students say may not be what they really mean. It takes time to get to know the student and to build a trusting relationship. If the student thinks that you do not care for him or her by doing things for them, they may shut down and not be

	to find out what they really mean. Students rely on the context and on nonverbals to convey a message. It is also important to tell the listener what they think the listener wants to hear, and not to offend people, especially when they are in higher positions, so they can save face. It is also polite to refuse things that are offered (food, for example) with the expectation that it will need to be offered several times before they can accept. Likewise, when told "no", they may argue/ ask repeatedly after being told "no", since this is what they think will bring the expected result. Repetition is very acceptable.	student will find it more acceptable to give vague answers or make excuses instead of saying "no". They will also avoid direct confrontation at all cost and prefer to work through third parties who can mediate for them. Another tendency may be to exaggerate things, for several people to talk at the same time, or to get very loud and excited when they feel strongly about something (some Arab cultures). Other cultures may be very quiet (Asians, for example); for them it is important to be modest and respectful; this could be shown by not looking people directly in the eye and by speaking in a very low and soft voice.	willing to do anything. They will say yes but have no intention of doing things because that is what they think you want to hear. Silence may not mean that they agree; in fact it may mean that they should not object and shows that they do not agree (again, being respectful). Open ended questions such as "why did you do this? are not productive; instead, closed statements followed by some silence may be better in getting students to open up (for example, "this ….must have been very difficult for you", showing the student that you feel for them, understand them, and want to help them. When the need for confrontation arises, know that this makes them very uncomfortable and maybe use the help of someone else as mediary (maybe a teacher or religious person). It helps to use stories or accounts of personal or other people's experiences to get a point across (could be fictitious, too) without mentioning people by name to avoid embarrassment.
HOUSEHOLD RULES AND FAMILY LIFE	Many students could be used to male dominance in their families. It could be that they did not have a lot of independence (may be more the case for females than males) and had a lot of very direct guidance from their parents. They may not be used to the concept of getting an allowance and may have no practice in spending money, either not wanting to spend any or spending too much. Household chores may not be something they are used to, especially males. Objects or personal things may be considered as belonging not to one individual, but to everyone in the family because it	Families may find the students passive or needing too much guidance, direction, and/or attention. They may be perceived as lazy if they have to be constantly reminded to pick up after themselves or keep things clean. They could also be seen as immature. Some males may not be following instructions from females or feel uncomfortable in a female dominated household. Some communication practices may be perceived as "badgering", not listening, or not following instructions. Using other people's property could be an issue (stealing vs. sharing). Students could be expecting to be treated as guests at the beginning.	It may be advisable to enlist the help of a same sex person in advising the students. Doing things as a family and spending time together would be a good idea as well as giving a lot of direction and guidance at the beginning and slowly making changes. Taking the student to other families where behaviour patterns can be observed is also helpful. Of course, another good way to experience different family styles is by spending time with friends and their families.

	is one unit.		
TIME AND SPACE	Time is not as scheduled and more fluid in most of the YES countries. It is not as important to be on time. It may also not be common to plan things that will happen in the future. Personal space may not be as important and people could stand a lot closer during conversations.	Some students could be late or oversleep. They may want to stay up late. They may not be on time at school or for certain events the family is planning on. They may change their minds on whether or not they would like to do something or not openly state what they would like to do. Being physically close may make some people uncomfortable.	Students may need some time to adjust to a very time-oriented U.S. culture where it is important to schedule events ahead of time and to be on time. They may need some additional help in getting up or getting ready for events. Will need to have an explanation on space differences and how people feel about it in different countries.
SCHOOL	School and studying may vary also. In some countries, there is a lot of homework and students are expected to work on their own when at home. In some other countries, studying may be done at school and not at home. There may be more group activities or very little discussion. Testing is different (multiple choice and open book tests may be uncommon). Writing styles, learning styles, teacher/student interaction are most likely completely different.	Students may have a difficult time adjusting to school and different expectations from teachers and host families. Students who do little homework or little independent work after school in their own countries may be struggling in school. Due to the idea of saving face and indirect communication styles, they may state they have done their homework and school is going well when in fact it is not. Teachers who have not had experiences with people from other cultures could be misinterpreting behaviours and ways of approaching homework and classroom interaction. In Asian cultures it is not expected to criticize or disagree with what the teacher is saying; they may be very quiet in class. In other countries, the classroom may be very loud and students work a lot in groups.	It is definitely a good idea to contact the school and the teachers early and get progress reports. It may be a good idea to monitor homework and to provide help (or enlist help), especially in the beginning. Get grade reports early and do not assume that the student's reports on school work are accurate. Get the teachers emails and check on progress regularly before there are any issues. Conversely, if a student studies all the time, encourage them to go out and spend time with friends. Working with friends on school work is also a good idea instead of not doing any homework. It is ok to help each other out but not to do the work for them or to copy from others. Certain subjects in school such as U.S. history or literature may need to be taken later on in the school year. After hour school clubs could help in making friends at the school and enlisting help with homework. Any issues regarding school should be reported to the volunteers early on, so help can be set up before there are any problems.