



The four phases of living in a new country

In a group, read aloud the paragraphs and discuss in which order they should go. Put them in the correct order from first arriving in a new country to finally feeling at home.

Everything is exciting and new. You might think that the new culture is ideal, and you might think that it is much better than your own. If you are sometimes frustrated or have problems, you quickly recover. Everything is quite positive, the people in the new culture are very nice. This stage can last for months, or maybe only a couple of days. It is called the tourist stage because tourists generally do not stay in a different place long enough to have culture shock.

In this stage, all the little problems and frustrations appear much bigger! You may be very preoccupied with cleanliness (you think everything is dirty and unhealthy); you may be worried that other people want to rob you or cheat you; you feel confused and lonely. During this stage, if you find someone from your own country who has lived in the new culture for a long time, you may become dependent on them. You may find other immigrants and complain together about the new culture, making stereotypes of the people from that culture. You miss your own country and culture a lot. If it is possible, you might try to go home.

If the shock was very hard, you will not get to this stage. If you do decide to stay, you eventually learn to deal with the differences. You may try to integrate the new culture with your own beliefs. You begin to learn the language and make more friends. You have the occasional crisis, but you develop a positive attitude towards it. Maybe you can even laugh about your difficulties! This period of adjustment can be slow, and it is always possible to go back a stage into shock again.

You can now live with the new culture. Although it is difficult to be completely assimilated, you go through important personal changes and growth as you become integrated into the new culture. You develop a bicultural identity.

This is the shock of coming back home. You return from your time in another country and everybody is happy to see you again. The only problem is that you have changed a lot in ways that they haven't. And they don't understand that you have changed. Nobody wants to relive those fascinating, cultural memories. You almost feel like a stranger in your own culture.