

**Topic: Culture Shock and Cultural Adjustment**

**Let's get started...** When you first came to the United States, how did you feel? Were you happy, excited, sad, or nervous? Today, we will talk about "culture shock" and how people learn about living in a new culture.

**Background:** Research shows that most people go through 4 stages when they are learning to live in a new country:

1. In the "honeymoon" stage everything seems wonderful, interesting, fun, and exciting – like being on a vacation. The future looks good.
2. People start to face the difficulties living in a new country: a different language, different foods, traditions, clothes, and even different ways of interacting with others. Some people become very "homesick" -- they want to go back to their home country. They start to dislike the new country. They may feel frustrated, discouraged, angry, and depressed.
3. People start to learn more about the new country, and start to find things they like, as well as things they don't like, about the new country. They have learned enough of the new language to get around comfortably.
4. People have adjusted to living in the new country. Although they miss things about their native country, they have made a good adjustment, and are able to live and work in the new country without too much difficulty.



**In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:**

Do you agree that people experience these 4 stages of cultural adjustment? If so, which stage are you in? Tell a partner from a different country about a success or a difficulty you have had adjusting to living in the U.S.

**Share your partner's answers with the group.**

**Discussion Questions:**

Before you came to the United States, what were your ideas about the United States?

Before you came to the United States, what were your dreams? (What did you want to do in the U.S.? What job did you want? Where did you want to live?)

Did you have family members living in the U.S. before you came here?

Did you have friends living in the U.S. before you came here?

What were your first impressions of your new city in the U.S., the first day you arrived? Talk to a partner from a different country, and compare ideas about your first impressions. Then, share with the whole group.

What were your thoughts and feelings after one week? After one month? After three months? Talk to a partner from a different country, and compare ideas about your thoughts and feelings. Then, share with the whole group.

What was different from what you had expected? Talk to a partner, and compare ideas about your expectations and your real experiences. Then, share with the whole group.

What was the same as you expected? Talk to a new partner from a different country, and compare ideas about your experiences. Then, share with the whole group.

Talk to a new partner from a different country and compare your experiences: What was the most difficult thing for you about coming to the U.S.?

- Was it leaving family and friends behind in your native country?
- Was it learning a new language?
- Was it eating new foods, or not being able to find ingredients to make your favorite foods from your native country?
- Was it learning a new system of money?
- Was it not having a job, or not having a job in the same profession as you had in your native country?
- Was it something else?

After talking with a partner, share your ideas with the whole group.

Are any of these things still difficult for you? What is easier now?

What do you like and not like about living in the U.S. now?

Like:	Don't like

**New words and Idioms:** culture shock; research; stages; honeymoon stage; being on a vacation; to face reality; cultural adjustment; adjust; traditions; habits; customs; clothing styles; ways of interacting; homesick; frustrated; discouraged; depressed; enough; to get around; adjustment; first impressions; compare ideas; expectations; ingredients; system of money.