

Just as you have gone through a period of adjustment while you were abroad, you need to prepare yourself for a period of readjustment when you return "home".

You have had a very unique cultural experience living and learning abroad, and you have likely changed some while you have been away. Because you have changed, you may feel the place that you are returning to (home, school) has also changed, and indeed it might have. You will most likely be very sensitive to even the smallest of changes, and because these changes will be so unexpected you may need some time to readjust.

Immediately after you return, you will probably go through a time of euphoria and excitement. However, as you try to settle back into your former routine, you may find that your overseas experience has changed some or many of your perceptions and assumptions, your way of doing things, and even the way you see yourself. In a sense you have become a new person, a new "self". This period of intellectual and personal growth that you have experienced may result in you feeling disoriented as you adjust to your "new" environment.

The length of the period of readjustment depends on how immersed you had become in the foreign culture. The more immersed you were in the culture the more difficult it will be to have things get back to your sense of what is "normal". However, if you are aware that changes have taken place and try to learn from them, a smooth readjustment period is more likely.

Your experience of having dealt successfully with culture shock while abroad will also give you the psychological tools you will need during this period of readjustment.

Ways to Cope with Reverse Culture Shock

- maintain contact with friends you made abroad
- maintain contact with the culture you have left (via letters, e-mail, magazines, phone)
- talk to your friends in your home country
- discuss the things you are feeling with friends, family members, teachers, counselors
- use your experiences to help others by tutoring and mentoring
- make connections with other study abroad returnees or students preparing to study abroad

It is important to find a way to integrate this new "self" into your personal and academic life. This is an opportunity for you to become bicultural (being able to function competently in two cultural environments).

Adapted from: Exploring Cultural Differences by Bill Hoffa,
<http://www.studyabroad.com/handbook/cultdiff.html/#shock>
Culture Shock, <http://atsadc.org/nafsa/shock.html>
Stages of Cultural Adjustment, <http://www.uazone.net/Adjustment.html>