

Reverse Culture Shock

A Word on "Reverse Culture Shock"

During the period before going abroad students are informed of the challenges they may face in adapting to a new culture, commonly, known as culture shock. Like the outgoing students, returning students also confront the sometimes-difficult process of re-adapting to their life in the U.S. The "reverse culture shock" experienced by returning study abroad participants may seem more difficult or stressful than the adaptation process they anticipated when they lived abroad.

Here are a few typical themes noted by study abroad participants upon their return:

- A difficult time relating to friends and family members.
- Missing aspects of their experience overseas.
- Feeling "down" about being back.
- Frustration with the minimal interest in their overseas experiences by friends and family members.
- Lack of interest in their pictures, journals and anecdotes.
- An inability to effectively communicate their experience to others that have not had a similar overseas journey.

Hang in there! This experience is only temporary, as was your initial culture shock when you went abroad. Your friends and family may not be able to relate to your experiences because they weren't there with you and they may not recognize that you need time to readapt and get caught up with life in the U.S. Your experience may have produced new behaviors, attitudes and values they do not recognize. You might even have a whole new perspective on the world. In short, you are a different and it will take time integrate your new view of the world with your life back home.

Here are few suggestions to help ease your "reverse culture shock":

Talk to other returned students that have also gone abroad and would wish to hear about your experience. Get involved on campus with programs for international students studying at URI, become a member of a student organization with an international focus (IDEA, African Awareness Association, Cultural Italian Organization, Latin American Students Association, etc.), volunteer with OIE by participating in the Peer Advisor Program

Visit to OIE and talk to a Study Abroad Advisor. We are here to listen and would like to hear all about your experience. (We would like to see your pictures too)!