

Culture Shock

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According to Webster's dictionary:

Culture Shock -a feeling of confusion, doubt, or nervousness caused by being in a place (such as a foreign country) that is very different from what you are used to.

WHY NO ENGLISH!?

According to Vagabond Journey:

Culture Fatigue- a state of being where the small, adverse intricate of the culture begin to bother you out of reasonable proportion after living in another country for an extended amount of time.

WHY JAPANESE PEOPLE!?

The Four Stages of Culture Shock

Stage One- The Honeymoon Phase

Everything is awesome! You feel touristy and can do whatever you want. You go to every shrine in Kumamoto and to all the hot springs; nothing is holding you back. Everything is interesting and you are eager to explore and learn about your surroundings. You are especially motivated to learn Japanese and volunteer in the committee.

You feel can handle all life's problems.

Stage Two- The Culture Shock Phase

Everything sucks! Everything that was once good is now gone. That shaved summer ice; that delicious yakitori; and, those warm friends you made at orientation, all gone. No one at school understands you in any language. You had natto (smelly fermented soybeans) and shishamo (pregnant bitter fried fish) for school lunch. After school, you get home and have no insulation, so you are either sweating profusely or frozen to the tatami. You try to enjoy your weekend, but you can't since that new movie isn't coming out for another 3 months, or you wanted to play Pokémon Go, but the company releasing has been a month or so behind while your friends are level 20 and you are just starting. Yep, it's all going downhill.

But it's OK because culture shock comes and goes.

So when does Culture Shock usually occur?

The largest amount of culture shock (typically in small increments for JETs) occurs between the months, December-March. However, every situation is different. Here are some signs to show when it will occur:

- It's becoming very cold out.
- By 5:30p.m., it's pitch-black out.
- Holidays are changing (December 24th and 25th are school days...)
- "Oh, and by the way, it's **re-contracting** time! Are you in or out?"

Symptoms of Culture Shock-

Irritability- don't make me re-correct the same English mistakes!

Loneliness- no one lives near you.

Restless- pacing around your apartment cause it's cold.

Anxiety- are there mukade in my room?

Sleepiness- you fall asleep at work, in class, and during meetings.

Paranoia- everyone always is staring at you.

Stage Three- Adjustment and Reflection

Everything is better! You start accepting your new life and you start to adapt to your new surroundings, again. Somethings that were once a chore, like filling in your Japanese address and phone number, are now a part of life. You can speak with people now and you can laugh together; your oyaji-gags (Japanese puns) are coming together. You don't easily get lost. You can find the ingredients you need to cook with. Your teachers and students know your personality. You've become one with the culture because now you can reflect on how different and similar it is to your own.

Nothing is impossible because you can adjust to it!

Symptoms of Adjustment-

Happiness- shishamo doesn't put you down.

Humor- you are the master of oyaji-gags.

Adjustment- lows and highs aren't a problem.

Reflection- I thought I was alone, but now I'm not.

Stage Four- Adjustment

Everything awesomer! Japan is now your second home. You've become closer to becoming bicultural and bilingual. You feel that your own culture cannot impact you negatively and neither can other cultures. You can fully adapt to anything and enjoy it. You have a deeper appreciation for Japanese culture, your own, and others now. You feel that you don't have to reject others or other cultures anymore to feel safe. You found a middle ground in all the chaos.

It was all chaotic for the first few months, but since then, you've overcome it.

Symptoms of adaptation-

Recognition- you can acknowledge the different between Japanese culture, your culture, and others.

Assimilation- you can now bow and greet properly with no one ever staring at you again.

Advice for Living and Overcoming Culture Shock-

Be realistic- set goals that you can achieve. You won't achieve fluency in Japanese in one year, but you certainly could level up your abilities. Always go for small goals that lead to bigger goals.

Change your routine- coming home right after school and vegging out won't make Japan a better place. Try new things and explore your surroundings.

Try a new or old hobby- hobbies make everything better. Get back into some of your old hobbies or try some new ones. Japan is a great place because everyone around you will share something in common.

Travel- Japan is small, but it's big! Japan has 47 prefectures that are all unique, so try exploring some of them. And we are also in Asia, take a weekend and see Korea or another country, get cultured.

Learn something new- try tea ceremony or ikebana. Try hosting an English class to meet new people. Take Japanese classes at the community center or grow your own garden. 1qa

Explore your surroundings- that bar and karaoke place next to your apartment might be your new hangout spot. Always try to explore your area. You never know what you may find next.

When all else fails- seek advice!

Don't let things get out of hand. There is always someone you can talk to.

Kumamoto PAs- your lovely PAs are always here to give advice and help.

AJET Peer Support Group- The AJET Peer Support Group, or PSG for short, is a confidential and anonymous telephone listening and referral service operated for JETs by JETs. It operates every night of the year from 8pm until 7am at the number 050-5534-5566, or via Skype (voice calls only) at "AJETPSG".

Tokyo English Life Line- Tokyo English Life Line (TELL) is a non-profit community service organization dedicated to helping foreigners with advice and counseling on the wide variety of problems they may run into living in Japan.

Life Line 03-5774-0992

Free, anonymous telephone counseling. 9am – 11pm daily

Friends and Family- reach out to your friends and family back, but be aware that might have trouble relating to your situation if they have never lived abroad.

Please check the Kumamoto JET support page for more information and support on other issues.

<http://kumamotojet.com/shin/index.php/support/non-jet-support/>

References

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