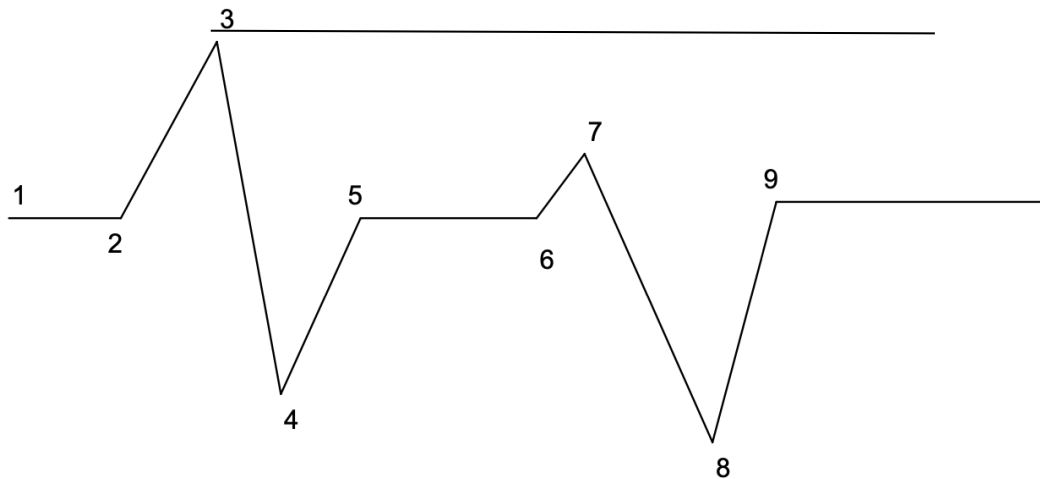


Culture Shock and Adjustment



1. **Culture of origin.** You're in your home culture functioning at normal levels of productivity.
2. **Host country.** You arrive in the new country.
3. **Honeymoon.** When arriving in an unfamiliar cultural context, the natural human response is to look for the familiar. Because you find that several things are similar and others are generally extending themselves in welcome, you tend to feel quite good and to function at quite a high level.
4. **Disorientation.** As you begin to interact more with the host culture, you start to notice how many things are in fact very different. You start to feel disorientated, tired and bad tempered and as a result begin to judge the host culture negatively. At this stage your level of functioning drops drastically.
5. **Recovery and Adjustment.** The more that you interact with the host culture, the more you begin to understand it and behave appropriately. You start to feel at home and your level of functioning returns to near-normal levels, if not to even higher -than normal.

REPATRIATION "W" CURVE

6. **Home.** At some point, you return to your culture of origin. This can be to live there again permanently or only for a holiday.
7. **Honeymoon.** Once you are back to where you know how things work, without having to think about the cultural implications of every action, you tend to feel very good and to function at a high level of productivity.
8. **Disorientation.** Often quite quickly though, you start to realize how much you and the home country have changed since you were last there. You begin to see the home culture from a different perspective and start to question its values and beliefs. Because this disorientation is unexpected, it tends to be a deeper and harder experience than the initial disorientation when moving abroad. As a result, you tend to function at your lowest level during this time.
9. **Adjustment.** As you interact more and more with the home culture, you begin to understand it again and eventually start to adjust. You are able to recognize the good as well as the bad and to find peers who also view the world from a multicultural perspective. You begin to function at a steady level, typically much higher than before you went abroad. Through your experience abroad, you have a wider understanding of yourself and the world, and a broader collection of skills and abilities from which to draw.

Based on the work of Gullahom and Gullahom (1963), "An Extension of the U-Curve"

PRACTICAL IDEAS:

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- > Involve your child in the choice of possible schools
- > Encourage your child to help with packing.
- > Visit the new town and school via the internet, in publications or in person
- > Research ways your child can keep up current interests
- > See if the new school can put your child in e-mail contact with a child the same age
- > Make a conscious plan to identify and say goodbye to all of the significant people in your child's life
- > Make a scrapbook with photographs and memorabilia
- > Encourage your child to start a journal of the move
- > Give your child's friends new address postcards
- > Take a cutting from a favourite plant to put in your new garden
- > Take a farewell tour of favorite places
- > Allow your child to take a few special things on the airplane
- > Try to maintain consistent child-rearing and family practices
- > Try to keep stable points of reference (e.g. visiting grandparents, holidaying in the same place)
- > If moving to a new country/culture, research and discuss with your child some of the possible cultural differences

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- > Provide the opportunity for your child to talk about upsetting feelings
- > Take a break from unpacking to explore the neighborhood together
- > Plan future experiences/adventures available in the new place which the family can share together
- > Give your child something to do (e.g. unpack a box, clean the windows)
- > Allow your child to have input into the decoration of his/her bedroom
- > Find out where to get familiar things such as foods, magazines, newspapers
- > Take photographs to send back to family and friends
- > Stay in touch via postcards, telephone or e-mail
- > Arrange for visits by old friends
- > Encourage your children to bring to your home any new friends they make in order to socialize

Excerpts from "Transitions: Leaving, Bridging, Arriving, Staying Behind," Frankfurt International School

SCHOOL

- > Make the new school aware of any health or learning issues
- > Bring all necessary academic & health records and a copy of your child's transcripts
- > Speak to the school counselor about possible course choices
- > If entering high school, familiarize yourself with graduation requirements
- > See if you can visit the school before the first day to get familiar with the new layout. Find out if your child can meet any teachers.
- > Find out day to day organization such as lunch, gym & school supplies
- > Make plans for your child to get involved in available activities. Find out when try-outs and auditions are scheduled.
- > If possible, meet up with other new families who have like aged children prior to first day
- > Ensure your child takes part in the school orientation program if one is available
- > Monitor your child's academic adjustment to catch potential problems before they become overwhelming

Excerpts from "Transitions: Leaving, Bridging, Arriving, Staying Behind," Frankfurt International School