

STUDYING ABROAD: IN CASE YOU FEEL CULTURE SHOCK

- Acknowledge the inevitable stress from change and losses. Allow time for rest, reflection and taking care of yourself physically and psychologically.
- Implement stress management techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, medication, or aerobic exercise.
- Learn to challenge your cognitive distortions such as: unrealistic expectations, "all or nothing" thinking, overgeneralization ("stereotyping"), "negative filter" (seeing the glass half empty, instead of half full), and "mind reading" ("they all hate me").
- Increase your knowledge about the host culture. Knowledge helps dispel paranoia and increases your sense of efficacy, as well as feelings of familiarity and comfort. You can learn more about your host culture through:
 - making a list of questions to guide your search for information
 - reading about the culture before you leave home and bringing some materials with you
 - talking with host nationals
 - talking with other foreign students and compatriots about what they have learned
- Find a host national who is sympathetic and understanding and talk with that person about specific situations and your *feelings* related to the situations. Try to see the culture through his/her eyes.
- Consciously and actively look for logical reasons behind the aspects of culture that seem strange, confusing, difficult or threatening. Look for patterns and interrelationships. Seek understanding.
- Resist making jokes or disparaging comments about the host culture and don't hang around with people who do.
- Seek professional help to address depression, excessive anxiety and to provide a supportive ear.
- Set up a routine similar to the one at home.
- Keep a journal.
- Link up through the world-wide web to the UM Counseling Center's self-help resources page. (http://www.miami.edu/UMH/CDA/UMH_Main/1,1770,2395-1;29026-2;28277-3,00.html).
- Have faith in yourself and in your hosts. Remind yourself that you have the skills to learn and grow from this experience.

[The above information is adapted from Survival Kit for Overseas Living, by Robert Kohls and from the University of Missouri-St. Louis Counseling Service.]