



Reverse Culture Shock

It is very common to experience reverse culture shock. Are you wishing you were still abroad? Missing the friends, family, adventure and lifestyle you left behind? Sometimes coming back home isn't always as easy as it sounds! Here are some reasons why you may be feeling this way, courtesy of the University of the Pacific's "What's up with culture?" site:

- **Culture shock is largely unexplained**
While you're prepared for culture shock when heading abroad, few people prepare for the return because they expect it to be easy and are surprised when it is not.
- **The perception of home differs from reality**
When you are abroad, images of home life can become idealized or romanticized. It is easy to forget or minimize the issues that were once sources of stress in your everyday life. Re-encountering them can be disconcerting.
- **You've changed—but people expect you to be the same!**
However major or subtle, things are different. You, the people around you, and your culture have changed. Sometimes this is obvious and immediately observable; sometimes it is "hidden" and only comes out under certain circumstances. People generally expect you to be the same person you were when you left and usually attempt to treat you that way.
- **Reverse culture shock is not recognized or understood at home**
While you were abroad, the idea culture shock was understood and largely expected. However, few people at home are likely to be familiar with the concept of reverse culture shock. Family and friends may pressure you to conform quickly and tolerance may be in short supply. People may respond to you having difficulty readjusting by suggesting you "get over it" as though these feelings are a conscious act on your part.

Be Prepared

Just like culture shock, re-entry shock does not always set in right away. At first you'll no doubt be excited to be home and catch up with all your friends and family! However, as things settle back into a steady routine for you, and after everyone has heard your stories and seen your pictures, you may realize you're missing your adopted country abroad.

If you do experience reverse culture shock, here are some tips and resources to help you settle back in:

- **Join an international club** or connect with international students on your own campus. Finding an internationally-focused community on your own campus can be a great way to stay connected to your own experiences abroad.
- **Consider sharing your experience with other students like you!** Serve as a peer mentor for incoming IFSA students, or contact your study abroad office to find out how you can connect with students on your own campus.
- **Revisit your study abroad goals** and start thinking about how you can carry them over to your life back home. This will help you avoid "shoeboxing" and will allow you to start incorporating the skills and experiences you gained abroad into your life in a tangible way.
- **Connect with other study abroad student experiences** by accessing online resources like [IFSA's Unpacked blog space](#) and stay tuned for details on IFSA's alumni photo contest!

- **Find a local community group** that focuses on international engagement, or that will give you an outlet to practice your foreign language skills.
- **Keep up with movies, music, news or sports from your host country** by accessing online resources and following relevant conversations on social media.
- **Visit the following links for resources and additional support:**
 - [University of the Pacific: What's Up With Culture?](#)

Ask for Help if You Need it

If small life adjustments and community engagement aren't lessening the intensity of reverse culture shock for you, don't be afraid to ask for help.

- **Counseling Services:** Your campus counselors are there to foster the well-being of all students within a respectful and confidential environment. These services can be provided in a variety of ways, such as individual counseling, group counseling, workshops, meditation groups, or general support. If you find that you are struggling with reverse culture shock, or if there's something specific from your time abroad that you need help address, know that there are individuals on your campus who can listen.
- **Study Abroad Office:** You may think of your study abroad office as the place you went for help prior to studying abroad, but they are also an excellent resource for students returning back to campus. Many of the professionals working in the office are passionate about international education and may have experienced reverse cultural shock themselves. Reach out to them to find out more about campus resources, or to set up a time to talk.
- **IFSA is still here:** IFSA is still here to support you as alum. If you aren't sure where to turn for the resources you need, please reach out so we can connect you with a staff member who can help. We're always on your team!