

Study Abroad Re-Entry Handbook



Returning home after a study
abroad experience- smoothly.

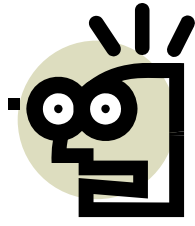
Created by Rhona Cadenhead-Hames, Study Abroad Advisor

“ ”

“Reverse culture shock hit me hard, and the elation I felt at seeing my old friends was drowned out by the confusion I felt being back in Buffalo. America seemed awfully cruel and overbearing when I returned and there was a part of me that felt really uncomfortable in public.

I moved into a new apartment in the city... I dove into life in Buffalo. I was surprised to find my old circle of friends had changed while I was away, and much of the group had dissolved. The friends I reconnected with were the ones that I had been closest to before I'd left, and I also discovered that they had each grown into “adults.” They all had jobs and apartments now that they didn't have when I left. It was painfully obvious that we were no longer kids.”

*Nathaniel Shelley
Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology
Tokyo, Japan-Academic Year*



Top Ten Re-entry Frustrations –

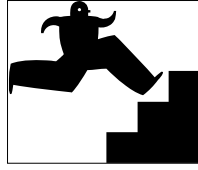
(faced by most study abroad
participants- no you are not alone.)

1. Boredom
2. "No one wants to hear about this"
3. It's hard to explain
4. Reverse homesickness
5. Previous Relationships have changed
6. People see the "wrong" changes
7. People misunderstand if I adopt elements of my host culture; they misinterpret my behavior
8. Feelings of alienation; seeing home with critical eyes
9. Inability to apply new knowledge and skills
10. Fear of losing the experience, like storing it away in a souvenir box that we only occasionally look at



Top Ten Re-entry Solutions

1. **Come** visit the UB Study Abroad Programs office. We are travel people, too. We want to see your photos, hear your tales and talk with you about your travels.
2. **Become** a Peer-Advisor. Your experiences and perspectives are of great value to students contemplating a study abroad program. The peer-advising program is a fun way to keep your experience alive and regenerating (and looks great on a resumé- one hour/week plus special events required).
3. **Join** the University at Buffalo- Global Ambassadors Group.
4. **Write** for UBAbroad (our on-line newsletter) We are always looking for students to write for our newsletter. If you are interested in submitting a short story about your experience let us know. We would love to share your words with interested students.
5. **Befriend** a newly arrived international student. You might remember how difficult it was when you first arrived in your host-country and how nice it would have been to have a 'friend' available to help. Ask us for details and a partner.
6. **Volunteer** at any of the Study Abroad Events our office sponsors. We are constantly looking for energetic people to assist at the various events each semester. For example, join us at the Study Abroad Fair in October this fall.
7. **Look** into the various student clubs and organizations available at UB. Learn about the various activities they sponsor. Get involved in working toward making UB more culturally and socially diverse!
8. **Share** your email address with students interested in studying on the same program or in the same country as you. Interested students love to email questions and hear first hand about overseas experiences. Your emails will be treasured!
9. **Make** a scrapbook of your travels. Include your memories along side the photos and souvenirs. You will treasure the scrapbook for years to come!
10. **Study** Abroad Again !!! If you have the itch to go abroad again, check with our staff about the various programs available. We are happy to help you explore additional international opportunities. Be a REPEAT OFFENDER!



Stages of Culture Shock

STAGE 1: DISENGAGEMENT / DEPARTURE

While you are still overseas, you begin to start thinking about moving back home and moving away from your experience and friends abroad.

STAGE 2: EUPHORIA / THE HONEYMOON

You may be very excited to be back home and others may be equally delighted to have you back. You have the opportunity to do, eat, see, smell and visit with all of those things that you missed while you were away from home. After people express their pleasure at seeing you again, and listen politely to your stories for a few minutes, you may suddenly and/or painfully realize that they are not particularly interested in what happened to you and would much rather prefer to talk about their own affairs.

STAGE 3: ALIENATION

In this stage, you experience dampened euphoria with feelings of alienation, frustration and anger. You may even feel like an outsider - a foreigner in your own country. Suddenly you feel irritated with others and impatient with your own inability to do things as well or as quickly as you hoped. Resentment, loneliness, disorientation and even a sense of helplessness may pervade.

STAGE 4: GRADUAL READJUSTMENT

The fourth stage of reentry includes a gradual readjustment to life at home. It is important to remember that the shock of returning home will eventually dissipate.



Coming Home Again- Absorbing Reverse Culture Shock



The situation

Remember your first few days, or weeks away? Remember feeling like a fish out of water, no matter how broadminded you tried to be? You wanted desperately to return home. Maybe you didn't even realize you were being affected, but you were.

Remember how you thought and felt? Well, get ready for what many occur when you return home! You may suffer temporarily from what has been called "reverse culture shock". This may come as no surprise, since "shocks" are common whenever we encounter a dramatic change. All forms of shock require a normal adjustment period.

The reassuring aspect of change is that it usually produces internal growth if handled correctly. This article is intended to acquaint you with some of the normal behavior patterns elicited by a return home from abroad. This won't make reverse culture shock disappear, but it will hopefully prepare you for what to expect, and how to deal with it, so you can have a more positive returning experience.

A shock or mild surprise

The degree of shock experienced by each traveler may range from a jolt to an uncomfortable agitation. There are a number of factors that may determine how great or small your adjustment may be.

- THE LENGTH OF TIME YOU WERE AWAY?
- DID YOU HAVE PREVIOUS TRAVEL EXPERIENCE TO THAT LOCATION?
- HOW MUCH CONTACT WITH YOU MAINTAINED WITH HOME WHILE YOU WERE AWAY?
- THE AMOUNT OF TRAVEL EXPERIENCE YOU HAD PRIOR TO THIS TRIP?
- WHETHER OR NOT YOU ENJOYED YOUR TIME ABROAD?
- DID YOU TRAVEL ALONE OR WITH OTHERS?

Common Frustrations/Anticipated Behaviors

BOREDOM

Life simply does not seem as exciting here in Buffalo as it may have while you were overseas. The humdrum of going to classes, going home, going out and going to sleep (repeat) does not compare to your weekend excursions to Scotland, Kyoto, Shanghai or La Paz.

NEGATIVISM

All of a sudden your home environment doesn't measure up to that terrific mental picture you had of it before you left or while abroad. Many American sojourners become quite negative about American society, labeling it too materialistic, too friendly, too backwards or too "something else". A common tendency is to withdraw, become defensive or to mentally wander abroad. Be reassured that in time, you will be able to incorporate an appreciation for the positive aspects of both your home culture and that from abroad.

FEELINGS OF ALIENATION

Change occurs within almost all overseas travelers. Sometimes, without even desiring it, you may find new beliefs; attitudes and patterns of behavior have now become part of your personality and life style.

Somehow the person you used to be doesn't feel at home anymore. Transitions to home become more stressful when you perceive the changes as negative. Even positive changes can be stressful as you feel pressure from family and friends at home to revert to the "old you". Avoid the temptation of discarding your positive changes.

PERSONAL CHANGE

Your insights have been broadened and your perspective is now different. Be aware that your emotional and mental climates have also changed. An attempt to go back to the "old you" will likely fail. Likely, the internal changes are positive ones and there will be no need for a reversion to the old. Try not to convert those around you. They haven't experienced what you have. Either they can't, aren't interested or are unwilling to understand. They may even have a hard time understanding and appreciating the "new you" and all the changes you have gone through.

It may be difficult to adjust back to a former lifestyle without some struggle. A healthy solution may be to combine the positive aspects of the old and new you. The result should be a much richer and enjoyable lifestyle.

It is probably unwise to impose your new perspectives and opinions on family and friends. Not many people enjoy being told what is the 'proper' way to eat or the 'civilized' way to address others. Vent your frustrations in supportive atmospheres where there are others who have been abroad.

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS

Social situations can be very challenging. Things like slang expressions, clothes, music, dancing and who's who can change. You may feel like an outsider. Your friends may seem boring and close-minded. Your interests may have changed.

It is not uncommon for those returning from abroad to feel superior to others. It can be disconcerting when others do not recognize your "advanced status" or pay little attention to your return home. Former friends may have found new friendships and have priorities that are now different than yours.

Be patient. If the friendship is worth maintaining, adjustments can and will be made. If not, developing new friendships can be a way to develop your new perspectives.

Concluding advice

Expect differences

Unexpected alterations in life are often harder to deal with than expected changes. Use change as a tool and teacher. Look for the positives in each situation.

Guard your health

Expect some extra exhaustion, depression or anxiety, which are often normal accompaniments to long distance travel and retuning home stress. The condition is temporary and curable, especially when you know what to expect and how to cope.

Getting it back together

Identify your new options as soon as possible after arriving home. Try to make as many arrangements for developing a lifestyle that will combine the best of the old with the best of the new. Be proud of everything you have accomplished by going abroad and start thinking about your next trip.

Office. This article was originally published by the Brigham Young University David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, 1984.

Redefine your world



To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served. To help promoted a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

It's important to join the Peace Corps for the right reasons. Because of a sincere desire to make a difference. To change something for the better. But it's important to know that, for all the giving Peace Corps Volunteers do, they also receive a great deal in return. From practical benefits such as student loan deferment to career benefits like fluency in a foreign language to the intangible benefits that come with making a difference in people's lives, there are a variety of rewards for the dedicated service of Volunteers. Rewards that last a lifetime.

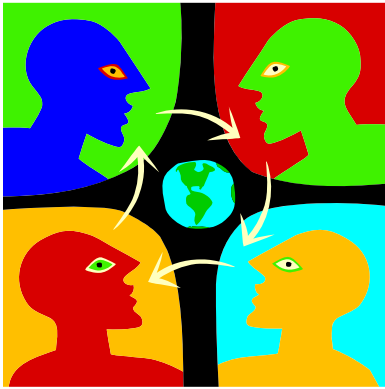
And, the benefits of Peace Corps service don't end with one's overseas service. The experience will affect your life long after you return home. It's an experience to draw upon for the rest of your life. As is often said, the Peace Corps isn't simply something great. It's the beginning of something great.

To become a Peace Corps Volunteer an applicant must be at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen. Volunteers must meet certain education and work experience requirements. When evaluating an applicant, the Peace Corps considers the "whole person" including your life experiences, community involvement, volunteer work, motivations, and even your hobbies. In most cases, applicants with a bachelor's degree in any discipline, strong motivation and a commitment to Peace Corps service will be competitive to become Peace Corps Volunteers.



www.peacecorp.gov

**For more information on applications and deadlines visit
<http://wings.buffalo.edu/fulbright>**



The World in Your Classroom

Global Ambassadors Visitation Program

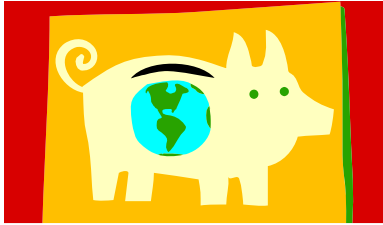
The Global Ambassadors Visitation Program is an outreach effort intended to bring the world into local elementary and secondary school classrooms. Global Ambassadors are UB international students and students with international experience who are interested in sharing their intercultural experience and knowledge with local K-12 students. This exciting program gives Western New York students the opportunity to learn firsthand about other cultures, while UB's Global Ambassadors get a glimpse of the American education system and meet new people.

You don't have to be an experienced public speaker to participate! School visits may range from one hour to a half-day, depending on the request from the school and your availability. By sharing some of your overseas experiences with local Buffalo students, you may very well inspire a new generation of global-minded individuals.

If you are interested in participating in the project, kindly complete the one-page questionnaire on-line at

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/academic/departments/AandL/world-languages/global/survey.htm>.

Hard copies should be returned to World Language Institute in 224 Clemens Hall. Thank you for your time and interest!



Internationalize Your Career Resources Brought to You by UB's Career Services

As a returned study abroad participant, you may want to infuse your career plans with some international flavor. Career Services, located in 259 Capen Hall, can help you extend your international experience beyond your academic life and into the world of work.

Whether you're interested in working in an Irish pub to help you finance your summer trip backpacking across Europe, doing an international internship during your senior year, or making plans to join the global workforce, you will find resources at Career Services to help you examine your options and improve your chances of success. The Career Resource Library has a diverse selection of book titles including (just to name a few):

- *International Business & Trade Directories*
- *Directories of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries*
- *Jobs for People Who Love to Travel*
- *How to Get a Job in the Pacific Rim*
- *International Careers*
- *Foreign Affairs: The Career of Choice*
- *Vacation Work's Overseas Summer Jobs*
- *Work Your Way Around the World*
- *Great Jobs Abroad*

Career Services also maintains paper- and computer-based files on many short-term work abroad programs such as "Work in Britain" and "Teach in China," and actively participates with the UB chapter of AIESEC, the international work exchange program.

Meet with a counselor Karen Nemeth in Career Services to discuss your international options, talk about cross-cultural differences in the world of work, get your resume critiqued or do a mock job interview. Schedule an appointment by calling 645-2231 or drop by the office in 259 Capen. Log on to the office's website at www.ub-careers.buffalo.edu using your UB person number as your username and password to check out international job listings and other web-based resources.