

STUDENT ADJUSTMENT CYCLE

These stages are far from universal, but most students who arrive in August for a 10-month stay, experience many of these stages at different times and to different degrees during their stay. Acknowledgment of these stages may help you to better understand some of the feelings your student may experience.

Stage One: Application Anxiety

December - July

Prior to arrival, your student may be anxious to receive confirmation of acceptance; they may experience anxiety regarding their ability to handle change. They may also be anxious to receive specific information about their host family.

Stage Two: Arrival Fascination

August - September

After they are accepted to the ETC program, your student may experience a tremendous amount of elation. This generally continues upon their arrival, when expectations are high and introductions are overwhelming. They may receive attention and be shown respect and concern that is different from what they are used to in their home country.

Stage Three: Culture Shock

September - June

This sets in when the initial excitement wears off, usually within weeks of their arrival. This stage is often initiated when the introductions and parties are over. The initial fascination and novelty has worn off and your student realizes that they will have to deal with their new environment for a long time. Common characteristics of this stage are changes in sleep patterns, confusion about how to deal with others and mental fatigue. Culture shock is often the source of many small problems. This takes the form of complaints about their host family, school, America, and Americans in general. These reactions are a natural part of most cultural adjustments.

Stage Four: Surface Adjustment

October - December

Your student's language improves slightly and they are able to communicate basic ideas and feelings. They also feel comfortable within small groups of friends.

Stage Five: Mental Isolation

December – January

This is a period of boredom, isolation and lack of motivation. Others have stopped "babysitting" your student's progress so they may have deeper difficulties in adjusting. Language difficulties continue to frustrate them. In particular, the holiday season is a difficult time. Your student may experience homesickness and loneliness.

Stage Six: Integration/Acceptance

February On

This is achieved when your student is at ease with their host family, school and the friends they've made.

Stage Seven: Pre-Departure Anxiety

April – June

The idea of leaving their host family and friends is almost unbearable. They know how much they have changed and are apprehensive about returning home. This is a time of great confusion. Your student wants to go home, but doesn't want to leave?! Most people can relate to this feeling.

Stage Eight: Re-entry**June On**

For the people at home, life has not changed much during your student's absence. Consequently, they may not have much interest in hearing about the year spent in the U.S., or not as much as they want to talk about it. Your student may experience some difficulties in readjusting to their country, family and friends.

Important Points to Share with Families

Students will experience some combination of Arrival Fascination and Culture Shock for the first several weeks. I will review upcoming phases of the student adaptation cycle with you at our monthly evaluations.

What may be completely normal to us may be strange to your student, and vice versa. Students are encouraged to adapt to American customs, but they can't manage it all at once.

Your student will most likely go through a stage of homesickness and feeling of loneliness. Talk to your student about this phase. Remind them that it is normal and will pass. Share a time when you felt homesick! Never underestimate the value of communication with your student.

After the first several days of rest, start to immerse student in your household routines. Take your student to the supermarket and discuss how you shop and budget for food. Show him/her what you like to eat and let him/her show you some favorite foods. Visit the school, post office, bank, recreation center, etc.