



Greenheart Travel Atlas

An Interactive Guide to Your Cultural Experience



The Greenheart Travel Atlas is your guide to help you get intentional about your cultural experience, while also giving you skills to navigate a new country and culture. With the help of the Atlas, we hope you are better equipped to articulate how you have grown personally and professionally during your travels.

Through your time abroad, it is our hope that you'll:

- Foster meaningful cross-cultural connections with others
- Recognize that people and cultures are shaped by their environment
- Grow your personal and professional leadership skills

This interactive guide was created exclusively for our Greenheart Travelers to allow you to reflect on your experiences, and help show how your life goals may have changed, how your assumptions and stereotypes may have shifted, and how you dealt with challenges and developed your skills as a global leader.

Your time abroad is pivotal, one that will leave you and your perspective on the world forever changed. We hope this guide will help you engage more deeply with your experience abroad to make it as impactful as possible!

What You'll Find Inside the Atlas:

Before You Go

- [Creating Your Own S.M.A.R.T. Goal](#)
- [Are You a Universalist or Particularist?](#)
- [Understanding My Multi-Cultural Self Worksheet](#)
- [Everything You Need to Know About Culture Shock](#)
- [The 5 R's of Cultural Change](#)
- [How to Soften Culture Shock Symptoms](#)

While You Are Abroad

- [Using the G.L.A.D. Technique to Improve Your Experience Abroad](#)
- [Navigating Homesickness and Culture Shock](#)
- [Immersing Myself Challenge](#)
- [Taking Action as a Volunteer](#)
- [Journal Prompts to Help You Reflect on Your Travels](#)

Once You Return Home

- [Understanding Re-Entry and Reverse Culture Shock](#)
- [Phases of the Re-entry Process](#)
- [Processing My Re-Entry Feelings Exercise](#)
- [Sound Biting My Experience Exercise: Reflecting on Your Travels](#)
- [Revisiting my S.M.A.R.T. Goal](#)

Icon Legend



Worksheet



Activity



Examples



Resources



Definitions



Printables



As you prepare for your departure date and get your packing list organized, it's also important to pack a few mental tools to help you overcome the challenges of immersing yourself in a new culture.

This section of the Greenheart Travel Atlas will help you get specific on your goals for travel and give you tools to navigate culture shock and the daily challenges of being in a new country.

In this section you will:

- Set a S.M.A.R.T. Goal
- Take a Universalism vs. Particularism Quiz
- Complete a "My Multicultural Self" Exercise
- Everything You Need to Know About Culture Shock
- Stages of Culture Shock
- 5 R's to Cultural Change
- Transitional Stress Worksheet

You are making this travel adventure a reality, and we are so excited for you to start envisioning the life-changing impact it will have on you!

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”
— Marcel Proust



The aim of this S.M.A.R.T. Goal exercise is to help you get specific on your motivation(s) for travel and create benchmarks to help you articulate how your travels have transformed you personally and professionally.

We understand that it can be daunting to set a goal for your experience abroad, so it can be a helpful exercise to put a bit of structure behind it. To get started, let's define what "S.M.A.R.T." stands for and how it will help you set a meaningful and measurable goal.

S = Specific

Making your goals specific will set out the what, why, and how of your objectives. To say "I want my time in _____ country to be personally transformative" is an admirable goal, but is a bit vague on the specifics of your growth.

Here are a few key questions you might want to ask yourself:

- Why am I going abroad?
- Is this experience a career break, a gap year, an adventure before starting a new job?
- Am I hoping to build my resume?
- Is this experience to help me explore the world and find my place in it?

Once these questions are addressed, you are on your way to being able to clearly define what you want to do, and how you will do it.

M = Meaningful

Equally important to identifying the specifics of your goal is understanding what would be the most important and meaningful outcomes for you as a result of this travel experience.

A = Action-Oriented

What action(s) will you take to accomplish your goal? What's your VERB?

Example: "I am going to journal my thoughts down every night so that I will be able to reflect on how my life has changed from this experience."

R = Realistic

Ask yourself if your goal can be achieved in your defined period of time.

Maybe you'll realize that you can't meet your goal all at once, and you decide to break it into smaller, more easily attainable goals. Or, maybe you need to give yourself a longer period of time to attain that goal.

Before you depart on your program, it may be hard to know what goals are realistic and what aren't, but you will have the opportunity to reevaluate yourself throughout your time abroad and adjust as necessary.

T = Trackable

You will need to define how your progress will be tracked along the way. Measuring your progress helps keep you on... wait for it... track! Trackability helps you celebrate your successes at benchmarks along the way, and motivates you to keep working toward your goal.

“ A goal properly set is halfway reached.

—Zig Ziglar





SMART



Creating Your Own S.M.A.R.T. Goal

Now it's time to practice. What's really important for your personal and professional development is ensuring that you have at least one goal that thoroughly meets the S.M.A.R.T. criteria

- S** **Specific** – List the who, what, where and why of your goal, and keep it simple:
- M** **Meaningful** – How or why is this goal important to you?
- A** **Action-Oriented** – What is your verb? What action will you take to accomplish your goal?
- R** **Realistic** – Is your goal achievable within your defined timeline?
- T** **Trackable** – How will you track your progress? Will you recognize when your goal has been achieved?



Example S.M.A.R.T. Goal

"I want to learn how I can apply my experience managing a classroom in Thailand to managing projects in my future career. This will help me differentiate myself against other candidates for my dream job at the United Nations. I will learn effective leadership methods through classroom experience, self-reflection and by talking with my peers. I will write a minimum of 50 journal entries during my year abroad in Thailand to reflect on how my life has changed from this experience."

Write out your completed S.M.A.R.T. Goal Statement:



Universalism and Particularism are one of a number of cultural dimensions that Greenheart Travel hopes you will understand prior to going abroad, because they serve as a useful tool for understanding cultural differences.

These concepts are two ends of a spectrum and represent how rules, etiquette, laws, and social norms should be applied.

Defining Universalism and Particularism

Depending on where you are traveling, you may have to make some adjustments to function efficiently within that society based on how you align as a Universalist or Particularist.

1Universalism : [noun | /ˈyʊnɪvɜːsəlɪzəm/]

This is a belief that certain absolute truths apply across the board, regardless of circumstances or the particular situation.

Universalists believe:

- The same rules should apply to everyone in similar situations, no exceptions for family, friends, or members of your in-group.
- Personal emotions should be ignored and people should look at the situation objectively.
- While life isn't necessarily fair, we can make it fairer by treating people the same way.

Americans, the British and Germans tend to be strongly Universalist.



1Particularism : [noun | /pəˈtɪkjələˌrɪzəm/]

This is a belief that there can't be absolutes because everything depends on with whom you're interacting.

Particularists believe:

- Personal relationships are very important.
- Exceptions will always be made for certain situations, and how you behave in a given situation depends on the circumstances.
- Those who are connected to a personal in-group, such as family and friends, will be protected and treated with a higher degree of care and forgiveness.
- Life is not meant to be fair.

Venezuelans, Brazilians, and Pakistanis lean towards Particularism.



Are You a Universalist or Particularist?

Now let's see which perspective you tend to align with on the Universalist and Particularist spectrum.

Below you will find a number of paired statements (column 1 vs column 2).

Place a check next to the statement that best describes the action you would take or the way you feel about the particular topic.

Please choose one or the other even if you think both are true. Try to be as honest as you can by answering quickly and without too much thinking.



	Column A	Yes, this is how I feel.	Column B	Yes, this is how I feel.
1	In hiring someone, I want to know about their technical skills, education and professional background.		In hiring, I want to know who the person's family and friends are, who will vouch for this person.	
2	In society, we should help those who are the neediest.		In society, we should help the neediest of those who depend on us.	
3	There are no absolutes in life; you always have to look at the particular situation.		There are certain in absolutes which apply across the board.	
4	I would be very hurt if my neighbor, a policeman, gave me a ticket for speeding.		I would not expect my neighbor, the policeman, to jeopardize his job and not give me a speeding ticket.	
5	The courts should mediate conflicts.		People should solve their own conflicts; it's embarrassing if it has to go to court.	
6	In general, people can be trusted.		My closest associates can be trusted absolutely; everyone else is automatically suspect.	
7	Performance reviews should not take personal relations into account.		Performance reviews inevitably take personal relations into account.	
8	You often have to make exceptions for people because of circumstances.		Exceptions should be very rare; otherwise, you open the floodgates.	
9	Contracts aren't necessary between friends.		Contracts guarantee that friends stay friends.	
10	What is ethical in a given situation depends on whom you are dealing with.		Ethics are ethics no matter whom you are dealing with.	

Total up the numbers for each column and note which perspective, Universalists or Particularists, has the most responses.

Row	Universalists	Particularists
1	A	B
2	A	B
3	B	A
4	B	A
5	A	B
6	A	B
7	A	B
8	B	A
9	B	A
10	B	A



Do you lean toward a more Universalist or Particularist point of view? Are you positioned on one end or another on the spectrum or more neutral?

How do your answers compare to your country destination's position on the spectrum?



Venezuela



Nepal



South Korea



Russia



China



India



Bulgaria



Indonesia

Particularist



Nigeria



Argentina



Singapore



Japan



Cuba



Mexico



Greece



France



Poland



Spain



Brazil



Czech Republic



Hungary



Germany



Switzerland



USA



Canada



Ireland



Sweden



Australia



UK



Netherlands



Romania

Universalist



It is useful to know your orientation regarding this cultural dimension, as well as that of your host country, to prepare for potential situations that might cause confusion or misunderstandings while traveling.

Now Test Your Knowledge



Example Situation

You are driving your car in the daytime and are approaching an intersection. Your light is red and you slow to a stop. There is no one else at the intersection. No cars, no pedestrians, no cyclists, no cops, no red light cameras, etc. You want to get to where you're going, and it would be completely safe to roll through the red light.

How would a universalist react and behave in this situation?

How would a particularist react and behave in this situation?

As you can imagine, a universalist would not drive through the red light. Despite the particularities of the situation indicating it would be safe and there was no chance of a ticket, red lights mean stop and that's that.

In contrast, a Particularist would resolve that it is perfectly safe to proceed through the red light, as there is no danger or negative consequences. They would likely drive through the red light.

Universalism and Particularism can be boiled down to:

- Rules versus Relationships
- Letter of the law versus Spirit of the law

So How Does This Apply to Your Travels?

By having a basic understanding of these two perspectives, you can prepare for situations that might arise during your travels. The examples below will give you an idea of how differing perspectives might lead to miscommunication and culture shock. If you are already aware of these potential scenarios, you will have more compassion for yourself and others in challenging times.

How Universalists May React When Traveling to a Culture Leaning Toward Particularism:

- Possibly experience the particularist society as corrupt or overly emotional
- Might be uncomfortable with the "it's who you know" mentality in adhering to rules
- Feel the society is closed and cliquish to outsiders

How Particularists May React When Traveling to a Culture Leaning Toward Universalism:

- Often feel people are impersonal, cold, rigid, rule-obsessed, or unfriendly
- Might feel uncomfortable with a culture of rules out-weighting relationships and family
- Could experience confusion in how a culture's beliefs of what is "just and appropriate" play a role in interpersonal relationships



Avoid Over-Generalizing:

While certain cultures generally lean in one direction or another, that does not mean you can apply these generalities to a single individual or assume any culture would fall 100% at either end of the spectrum.



Now that you have a better understanding of how different cultures might value relationships and rules of a community, it's time to consider your own personal values.

We hope that this next exercise will help you embrace the concept of being culturally responsive and culturally sensitive by examining how your own culture has shaped your identity, stereotypes and how you may perceive other cultural groups.

What Does Culture Even Mean?



1Culture: [noun | cul-ture]

The beliefs, customs, attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterize a particular society, group, place, or time into an integrated pattern of behavior featured in everyday existence.

Culture is learned, collective and changes over time, and is generally understood to be “what we know that everyone like us knows.”

By beginning to identify multiple layers of culture within yourself, we hope you will develop greater empathy and understanding, for yourself and others, during challenging times abroad. This exercise may also help you reevaluate how you see yourself in an ever-increasing multi-cultural world.

Step One - Identify Yourself



Examples of how you might define yourself include:

- Gender
- Religion
- Race
- Sexual Orientation
- Job Role
- Personality Traits
- Diet
- Political Beliefs





Understanding My Multi-Cultural Self Worksheet

Choose five different aspects of your identity to write in each of the boxes below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Think About Your Lens

Next, consider how each of your identifying characteristics serves as a lens through which you view the world.

- Does a religious identity affect your perspective on morality?
- Does one of your identities affect your diet or healthfulness?
- Does one of your identities make you feel particularly happy or isolated?
- Can you think of a time when you were proud to be associated with one of the identities you selected?
- Have you experienced a time when it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identities?

✈️ Consider Other's Stereotypes & Your Reactions

From your 5 identities, think of a stereotype you have heard about one dimension of your identity that fails to describe you accurately. Complete this sentence about one of your identities:

"I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an) _____."



Example:

"I am religious, but I am not unaccepting of other points of view."

How do stereotypes affect your life?

- When people make assumptions or misunderstand one of your identities, how does that make you feel?
- How would you feel if someone ignored one of your multicultural identity bubbles?
- How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?

It's important to remember that our identities are NOT static and we are constantly shaped and reshaped by what goes on around us. Have any of your important identities changed over time?

✈️ How do you envision this experience abroad will shape and change you? Do you think it will change one of your identifiers?



Build Empathy

After going through this exercise yourself, can you start to imagine how having stereotypes about people can cause unwanted or unintended consequences and miscommunication?

People come from different backgrounds, and it is important for us to develop a good sense of empathy to help us approach a situation with an open mind. To practice broadening our cultural perspective, we're going to borrow directly from Dr. Roman Krznaric's "6 Habits of Highly Empathetic People:"

Habit 1: Cultivate curiosity about strangers

We're taught as children "stranger means danger," but throw that notion out of the window. When you're sitting next to someone at a cafe, strike up a conversation. Expressing curiosity and being genuine in our inquiries exposes us to new and interesting worldviews.



Habit 2: Challenge prejudices and discover commonalities

It's likely you've read stereotypes about the culture of the country you'll be visiting. The danger in sweeping generalizations is we often use these assumptions to avoid learning more about a culture or connecting with the local community. By challenging these prejudices you will find commonalities and integrate into the culture at a deeper level.

Habit 3: Try another person's life

"All genuine education comes through experience." If you're curious about a culture, live as the locals do as often as possible and push yourself out of your comfort zone to gain new perspectives.

Habit 4: Listen hard—and open up

Have you ever had a conversation where it felt like your partner wasn't listening but instead just waiting for a moment where they could interject something about themselves? To learn about a person and a culture requires attention and deep listening. Don't just hear their words, actively listen and process the context of their perspective. At the same time, don't be afraid to be vulnerable and share a bit about yourself as well.

Habit 5: Inspire mass action and social change

Individual gestures of empathy and compassion can often inspire a ripple effect of positive action. Obviously, no one is expecting you to incite social change while traveling abroad, but recognize that just as individuals can be empathetic, so too can groups of people.

Habit 6: Develop an ambitious imagination

Don't restrict your sense of empathy to only select individuals or communities. Imagine if the environmental activist reflected on the perspective of a fossil fuel executive, or a driver found empathy with a commuting cyclist. These exercises shift our perspective and use empathy to build cooperation by searching for commonalities.

Embracing Your Multicultural Self and Empathizing With Others

As a global traveler, you are not only representing yourself, but also your country and culture. This is an opportunity to make a positive impact through personal interactions and bridge cultures and countries through meaningful travel experiences.



Your departure date is getting closer, and you're clear about your travel goals, have a better understanding of yourself and the cultures you will be exploring and are aware of the importance of empathizing and being open-minded during your time abroad.

Hopefully, you have also taken the time to scroll through photos of where you will be staying and have daydreamed about the foods you will try while abroad!

While going to a new country is exciting, adjusting to other cultures can become a series of bewildering and frustrating incidents that can leave you longing for home. Whether it is your first or fifteenth time abroad, you are bound to feel the effects of what people call "Culture Shock."



1 Culture Shock: [noun | /kəlCHər SHäk'/]

The feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly put in an unfamiliar or new culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.

It is completely normal to feel homesick, lonely, agitated or even depressed while traveling abroad, and symptoms of culture shock can include:

- Feeling exhausted and sleeping more than usual
- Having the urge to call home frequently
- Getting frustrated by simple things that normally wouldn't bother you

Try to think of culture shock like a spectrum – some people will feel it only a little, while other people will feel it a lot. Below is an example of what you might experience.

Cultural Shock Spectrum



Some minor
awkward moments
& incidents

Emotional, calling home
frequently, slight loneliness

Intense feelings of isolation,
depression, self-doubt



Is Culture Shock a Bad Thing?

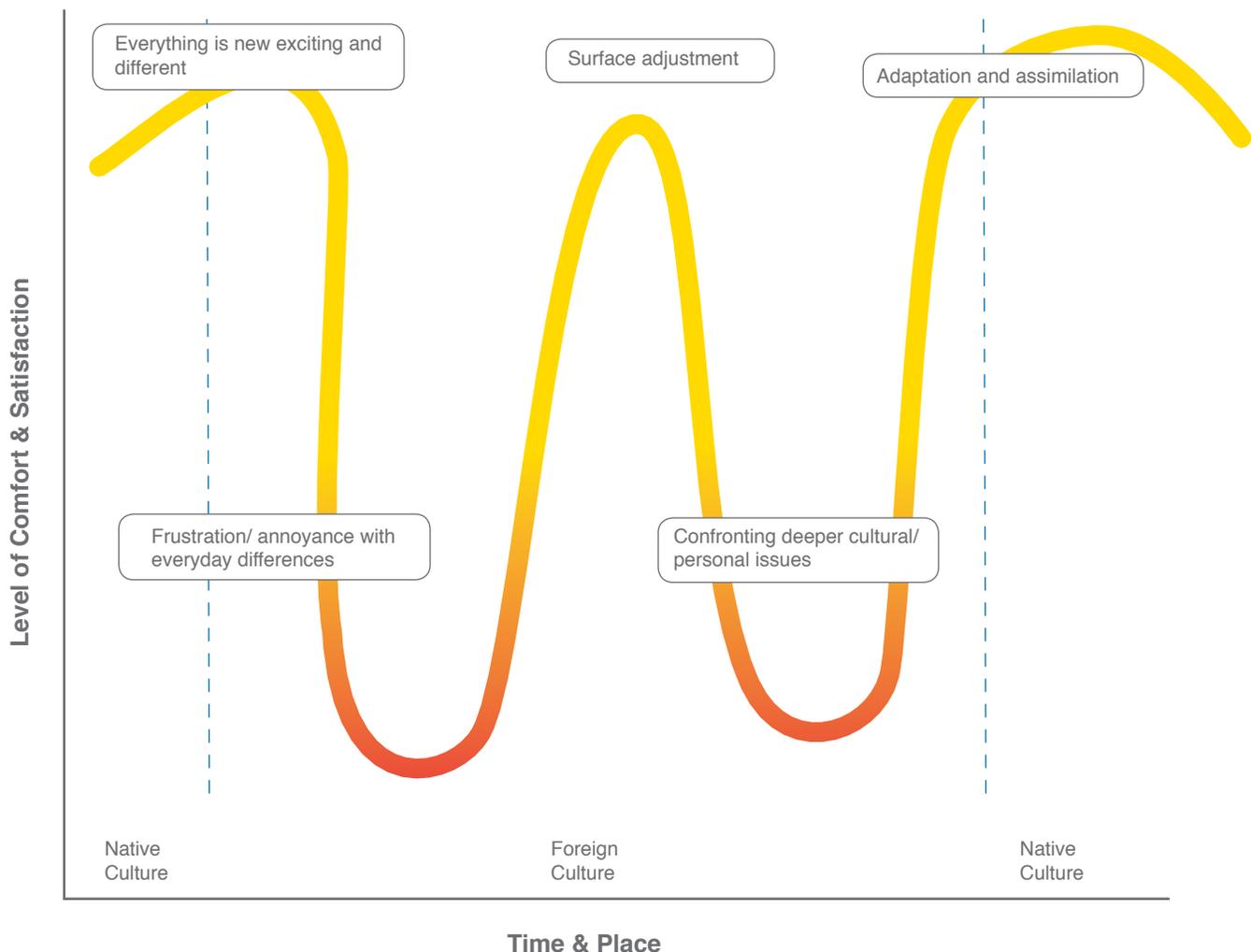
No, absolutely not!

It is important that you remove any stigma about culture shock and embrace the feelings as a sign that you are fully immersing yourself in your travel experience. If you don't experience a little bit of confusion or discomfort, you may not be pushing yourself out of your comfort zone enough.

Overcoming the challenge of culture shock is part of what will make this experience so impactful, and that is what it truly means to "Travel for a Change."

The term "culture shock" can be a misleading phrase. Not everyone will experience one defining "shock," but there are 5 stages of varying level of comforts to be aware of while traveling.

Often, you will go through many stages as represented by the W curve below. These stages last differing amounts of time and order depending on your experience. Your length of time abroad will also affect which stages of culture shock you might experience during your travels. Symptoms vary for each individual, but these are a few of the common experiences and emotions travelers might have at each stage.



Source: Hoffenburger, K., Mosier, R., & Stokes, B. (1999). *Transition experience*.





1. The “Honeymoon” Stage

- Experience enthusiasm for your new country, cuisine and culture
- Everything feels new and exciting
- Confidence is high



2. The “Shock” Stage

- Transition from the “honeymoon” stage to this stage is usually the most extreme
- Initial sense of “adventure” begins to wear off within the first few days or weeks
- Differences between your home and host community culture become apparent
- You may feel like an outsider
- Communicating in a foreign language becomes frustrating and exhausting
- Minor problems can quickly escalate to what feels like a major crisis
- Feelings of depression might develop
- Homesickness is most prominent at this stage



3. The “Adjustment” Stage

- Anxieties begin to subside as you gain a better understanding of your host country and culture
- You start to reach beyond your comfort zone to cope with your new surroundings
- A curiosity and new appreciation for the local cuisine, culture and customs occurs
- Increase desire to learn about the country and culture develops as you feel more comfortable



4. The “Isolation” Stage

- You’ve become acclimated to your new surroundings, but continue to feel like an outsider
- You realize that although you’ve done a good job adjusting, it is still difficult to get to know individuals
- Your core values are challenged as you begin to understand reasoning from other perspectives
- You’ve got a good grasp of the basics of the language, but realize there’s a long way to go toward having meaningful conversations



5. The “Integration” Stage

- Usually develops as you are nearing your departure
- You now “feel at home” in your host culture
- Adjusting to the norms and standards proves a success• You might become confused and lonely when your new cultural experiences conflict with your old
- Your language abilities have vastly improved and communicating is no longer frustrating
- New cultural customs may take preference over your old cultural habits
- At this stage you feel a satisfaction and love for your host country

Learning about the symptoms of culture shock is by no means meant to dampen your excitement for your upcoming travel adventure! Our goal is to help you be prepared for these emotional challenges and help lessen the “shock” while traveling abroad for a positive cultural exchange experience.



When you're feeling homesick or are completely overwhelmed by cultural differences, you may feel like giving up. You may doubt yourself and ask "Why did I do this again?"

The empowering news is that your attitude is the key to a successful experience abroad. By having an active interest in finding meaningful patterns in unfamiliar customs, you will expand your perspective, gain a high degree of self-understanding, and undergo great personal growth.

Aside from keeping an open-mind about your experiences, here are a few other suggestions to help navigate moments of frustration and confusion during your travels, and lessen the intensity of any symptoms you might experience during culture shock.

Have a Sense of Humor

Inevitably during your time abroad, you will make a language mistake or cultural etiquette blunders. You cannot expect yourself to know everything about a culture or language you have never experienced. Don't take yourself too seriously. The ability to 'laugh things off' will help guard against despair and remind you these are all learning experiences.

Be Flexible, Open-Minded and Adaptable

It's important to practice the ability to respond to new situations and tolerate the ambiguity of life abroad. Keep options open and judgmental behavior to a minimum. In short, go with the flow.

Remember to Communicate

The ability and willingness to communicate your feelings and thoughts to others, verbally or nonverbally, is critical. Don't wait until a situation escalates to let someone know your needs, questions or concerns.

Remember to be Curious and Polite

Curiosity is the demonstrated desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc. This skill or personality trait is important for intercultural travelers to learn how to adapt to their new environment. The ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for others is also an important component of effective relationships at home and abroad.

Be Positive AND Realistic

It is common to have certain expectations of what your travels will be like, but are they realistic? Having positive, yet realistic expectations of your travel experience will help ease the stress of culture shock.

Tolerate Differences

A sympathetic understanding of cultural beliefs or practices is essential to successful cross-cultural adjustment. However, it is also important to have a sense of self. Stand up for what you believe in, but don't be so rigid in your ways that you are unable to learn new information and perspectives you may encounter.



To give you a deeper understanding of how culture shock can manifest during your travels abroad, and how to lessen the intensity of its symptoms, it's helpful to understand the "5 R's of Cultural Change."

According to the 5 R's model, the main changes that you will experience when traveling abroad are:

- Routines
- Reactions
- Roles
- Relationships
- Reflections about ourselves

On the surface, these changes in routine or relationships seem obvious and small; but in reality, sometimes those are the most challenging parts of traveling. While that can be scary at first, these differences will help you learn about different cultures and lifestyles.

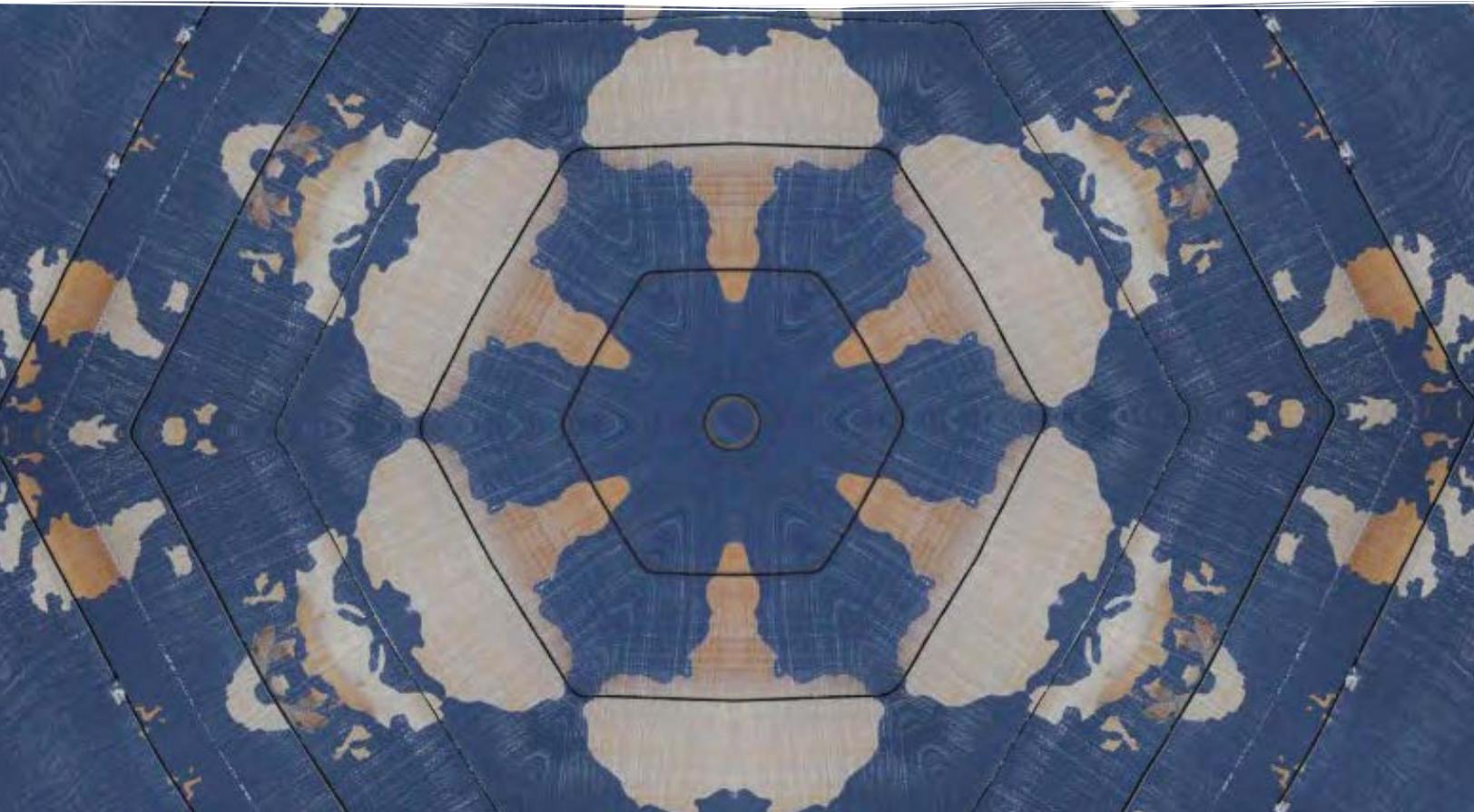
Being thrown out of your normal routines or behaviors can fundamentally shift your emotional state, creating transitional stress. Transitional stress is a normal part of traveling and will surface in different ways for different people.

The strength of the 5 R's model lies in facilitating an understanding of the causes of transitional stress, and helping you adapt your coping strategies accordingly.



“The first couple of weeks, I'm not going to lie, were pretty rough emotionally. Culture shock is definitely real! I wish I had listened better to Greenheart's preparation. But now I have more of a routine and I am meeting people and becoming more familiar with the area.

— Lynette, Greenheart Alumni 2016, Teach in a Homestay in France





The 5 R's of Cultural Change that most affect transitional stress are listed below. While it is completely normal to experience varying levels of stress during your travels, it is critical to prepare yourself for how you can best manage these feelings and reactions once they occur.

Which 'R's' of culture change do you think may cause you the most transition stress?

Use the boxes, on the right, to rate how much stress you expect you will have on a scale of 1-10 (1 = no stress and 10 = high stress) for each 'R'. Then, circle those feelings and reactions that you think you may experience.

Come back and review this list in a few months—you may find what stresses you changes over time, and therefore so do your reactions.

What Changes	Common Feelings and Reactions
 <p>Routines Schedules, meal times, how you travel around, amount of free time, a need for more teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tired or stressed • Not 'anchored' or 'grounded'
 <p>Reactions The way people interact and communicate, from greetings to facial expressions to appropriate behaviors and reactions in different situations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion and uncertainty • Less confidence • Withdrawing or isolating • Criticizing new culture
 <p>Roles Roles you are used to playing (being a family member) look and feel different with a new culture. You may assume new roles, which may cause mixed feelings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed emotions! • Excitement for new desired roles • Defensiveness for unwanted roles • Sadness for lost or lessened roles • Confusion for changed roles
 <p>Relationships Relationships around you can change. You may drift apart from certain relationships or you may experience a deeper connection despite the newness. At the same time, you have to invest energy in creating relationships in your own environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It takes a lot of energy to build relationships—but it is also satisfying • A sense of loss, often initially, with less communication back home
 <p>Reflections About Yourself You may start to notice that you change in subtle and not so subtle ways. You may adopt new behaviors, a different lifestyle, and may learn a lot about what you value most. You are growing and developing, becoming more aware of who you are, culturally and individually speaking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes adopting, sometimes rejecting the new culture ways of being or doing • Who am I? • What's most important to me? • Where do I feel at home?





Now that you understand the 5 key aspects of change that you are likely to face abroad, let's put this into the context of your upcoming program.

The added bonus is that by learning these stress-management tools, you will be better equipped to navigate uncertainty and new situations during your travels abroad and in your daily life when you return home.

What types of situations do you normally become stressed about?

What typically happens to you when you're under stress?

When you find yourself in a stressful situation at home, how do you handle it?

When you are stressed how do you manage your feelings?

With what you've learned about your destination country thus far, which of the '5' do you think will differ the most once you arrive? The least?

Which of the '5 R's' do you think may cause you the most transitional stress while abroad?

Complete this sentence: "While I am abroad, I plan to manage my stress by":

If I am unable to do the above task to manage my stress (ex: I can't run outside, there isn't a gym nearby), my alternative plan for overcoming the stressful situation is:

Whenever you have a stressful day abroad, this worksheet can be a helpful reminder of what you need to do to navigate your feelings. Sometimes, giving yourself a little bit of space to reflect is just what you need to shift your perspective.

It's a good idea to review your answers after a few months—you may find what stresses you changes over time, and therefore so do your reactions.

By thinking about and preparing for these cultural encounters, you will enrich your experience, and start to feel more comfortable in your new surroundings.





The 5 R's of Cultural Change

How can you best manage transition stress?

Here are specific ways to manage stress for each 'R' of culture change:



Routines

- Expect things to take more time and energy, especially at the start
- Eat healthy food, exercise, and get plenty of rest
- Proactively create new routines by doing the most important things first



Reactions

- Learn as much about the culture as possible
- Ask students, your host family, or your LC to help you understand others' reactions and act appropriately
- Be curious toward differences you experience
- Take a deep breath



Roles

- Expect roles to be different
- Have conversations about what it means to be a student, young person, family member or other roles in your host culture



Relationships

- Know it will take time to build new relationships
- Take initiative - reach out, join a club, and build new connections
- Create rituals to keep relationships back home going (Sunday Skype calls, a blog, online photo album)



Reflections About Yourself

- Acknowledge that these changes are natural during transitions
- Note your feelings. Write in a journal and reflect on what you are learning about yourself
- Seek out support from other people who can relate to your experience and share



On days when you might be feeling frustrated or sad, the G.L.A.D. technique, developed by Donald Altman, can help shift your perspective toward a feeling of joy and balance. By using the acronym G.L.A.D. you can begin to shift your thoughts to the present moment and navigate through challenges while traveling and living in a new culture.

G = GRATITUDE

What is one thing that you are grateful for today?

This can represent the most basic gratitude such as having food, water, and a roof over your head. It could also be something more complex or significant, such as a developed relationship, meaningful work, a caring community and good health.

L = LEARNED

What is one new thing you learned today?

This can be something you learned about yourself, someone else or the world around you. It could also mean noticing a new perspective or sense of self that has helped you develop.

A = ACCOMPLISHMENT

What is one small accomplishment you achieved today?

Often we mistakenly believe that an accomplishment has to be something huge, but in truth, an accomplishment can be something ordinary that you did for yourself or someone else. Some examples might be: getting enough sleep, not skipping meals, taking a small step towards a goal, and having a short conversation in the local language.

D = DELIGHT

What is one thing that delighted you today?

Consider anything that made you laugh, smile or brought you joy. This can be as simple as a bird's chirp or a colorful flower, or it could be a nice interaction you had with a neighbor or barista at your local coffee shop.

Putting the G.L.A.D. Technique into Practice

Now that you're familiar with the acronym, you can practice this technique daily, no matter where you find yourself. To help you get started, we've created a short worksheet for you to use so that you can practice the technique every day, for at least 2 weeks. At the end of your program you can return to your completed worksheets to reflect on your experience and its impact on your personal growth.

Developing "positive mindfulness" is particularly important for moments of stress and culture shock. It is also an important tool to stay present during your travels to help you remember the meaningful experiences.





Learning to Be G.L.A.D. Worksheet

Today's Date

G

What is one thing that you are grateful for today? What is something truly important in your life at this time?

L

What is something positive you learned about yourself today?

What fact(s) did you learned today that made you curious or more aware of the world around you?

A

What was one thing you accomplished today?

D

What made you laugh or smile?

Using all your senses of smell, touch, sight, etc., what small thing of beauty did you experience today?

Reflection

Now close your eyes and think of your day and what you wrote. Breathe deeply for a few minutes and visualize a positive image from the day.

Write down something important from this exercise that you want to remember.



So often when we travel, we seek out comfortable routines and circles of friends to combat culture shock. While this is not a bad thing, we can sometimes miss opportunities to fully immerse ourselves in our host community's culture.

To help motivate you to get out of your comfort zone during your program, we've developed the "Immersing Myself Challenge."

Consider this a scavenger hunt for cultural exchange. All exercises should be completed in your host country's language to the best of your ability.



Cultural Immersion Challenge!

- 1 Approach 2-3 people on the street to ask for directions in the local language.
- 2 Eat at a restaurant and order in your host country's language without an English menu.
- 3 Visit a local market and ask about and/or purchase a variety of produce using the local language.
- 4 Call a local business and ask details about when they're open, what they sell, and where they are located.
- 5 Visit a local museum by yourself. Engage in conversation with a visitor or museum employee about the subject of an exhibit.
- 6 Have friends over for a movie night where you watch an entire film or show in the local language without subtitles. Then have a discussion about it afterwards in the host language.
- 7 Attend a festival, fair, or event that is locally celebrated and ask a local person to explain why it is culturally significant.
- 8 Cook a dish in the host country's style of cuisine using unique, local ingredients.
- 9 Have a 15 minute conversation in your host country's language with your host family or co-teachers about a complex topic.
- 10 Film a five minute travel segment with a foreign friend or host sibling in the local language, showing potential travelers what they can visit in the host community.



Place d'Armes



Château Frontenac

We've talked about culture shock and homesickness earlier in the Atlas exercises, but getting through challenging times can be hard no matter how much you have prepared. To help you get through the days when you feel alone and long for the familiarity of your home and family, we've created a reference list of helpful tips to navigate challenging moments.

Putting Your Challenging Days into Perspective:

- Remember that stress, homesickness and culture shock are normal and temporary
- Be compassionate with yourself; it is ok to make mistakes, have bad days and feel homesick
- Consider that just as you have 'bad days' at home, you will have 'bad days' while living abroad

How to Empower Yourself When You're Feeling Homesick or Experiencing Culture Shock:

- Discuss your feelings with your local coordinator and/or host family
- Identify your emotions by journaling about how you're feeling and challenges you are facing
- Immerse yourself in your host community and keep busy
- Celebrate the differences of your host community rather than labeling cultural distinctions as "better" or "worse"
- Take care of your health: eat properly, exercise and get plenty of rest
- Be curious about what is going on around you; ask questions, join in, help out

What To Avoid, (Even Though It Will Feel Like The Best Solution To Your Sadness At The Time):

- Frequent calls home to family or friends; they make it hard to stay immersed in your experience abroad
- Scrolling through social media and comparing your experience with others
- Spending long periods of time isolated in your room
- Making quick judgments without communicating or experiencing situations first-hand
- Comparing your host country life with your life back home



It's important to explore the globe while respecting the environment and cultural heritage of the destinations we are visiting. We believe that a healthy planet is not only critical in personal health and well-being, but also necessary to create peace and harmony on our planet.

Take a look at the environmental topics in the chart below. These exercises will help you stay aware of your connection with environmental values.

Feel free to journal your thoughts on the topics below to reflect on when you return home.

	Investigate	Observe	Act
Water	Research where your host community sources their drinking water.	Record your water consumption for one week.	Set a goal to reduce your personal consumption of water.
Energy	Research the main energy sources in your host community.	Make a list of the major energy users at your accommodation. This could be appliances, air conditioning, lights, etc.	Make a plan of how you can individually reduce energy consumption. (ex: line dry your clothes, unplug appliances when not in use)
Food	Find out the main food source in your host community (ex: market, grocery store, grow themselves)	Record the attitudes and values about food in your host community.	Plan and cook a meal for yourself (or host family). Try using local food sources, if possible.
Clothing	Do a little online research on the clothing industry. Are you familiar with fair trade?	Notice your host community's clothing style. Do they buy from thrift stores?	This is a great time to reflect on needing less clothing. Write down how it has made a positive, negative or neutral impact on your life.
Transportation	What are the most common modes of transportation in your host community. How do these differ from your home community?	Sit in a public place for 30 minutes and tally the number of individuals you see using environmentally-friendly modes of transit.	Reflect on your own transportation routine – make a plan to try out a more environmental friendly route.
Recycling	What are the laws and practices around recycling in your host community?	Notice if and how people recycle. Do they sort trash? Compost? Donate old items?	Think of all that you throw away into a landfill. Pay close attention and start recycling or donating what you can. Try and reduce it from week to week.
Connect with Nature	What are the green spaces in your host community? Are there parks nearby? National parks?	How much time do you and/or your host family spend outside?	For one week, spend 15 minutes every day outside. Record what you see, hear, and observe.
Learn about Community Issues	Research important issues that are affecting your community	Take a survey of 10-20 people in your community asking them "What do you think is the biggest issue facing your community today?"	Reflect on the results of your survey – are these issues similar to those faced in your home community? How are they different?
Home Communities	Consider the above questions for your HOME community. Find the answers through emails home or internet research.	Compare and contrast between your host and home community.	Based upon your findings, make a commitment when you return home in one of the areas that you want to work to change.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”
— Margaret Mead



We encourage our travelers to volunteer while they are abroad and after they return home. Many other countries do not have the same level of support for community volunteerism or it is not a societal norm to participate in service learning.

No matter the culture's experience with volunteerism, it is important to remember that at the heart of volunteering is connecting with people and place.

Traveling for a Change

When you travel on a Greenheart Travel program, you are automatically eligible to be a member of the Greenheart Club. This unique community equips you to make deeper connections through volunteer service and gives you a chance to connect with Greenheart alumni from all over the world.

The Greenheart Club also gives you unique access to Greenheart's Service Grants. These grants are awarded to Greenheart International travelers to use for community development projects in their host or home country.

A Greenheart Grant is the opportunity to create, improve, or maintain an impactful, community-focused project abroad or at home. Grant funds could be applied to supporting women's cooperatives, schools, community centers, or health clinics, for example.

Testimonial:



“ As I write this, I can't help but be thankful for all the help we had in putting together this event from our Greenheart Grant. It's really magical how a small idea can turn into something unforgettable with a little bit of hard work.

— Renee Ormond, Greenheart Travel English Teacher in Colombia and Greenheart Grant Winner



You have been doing daily check-ins using the G.L.A.D. technique, learning from challenging moments with the help of reflection and even getting involved in the community through environmental volunteerism. These are all life-changing learning experiences that are helping you to grow personally, and tangible examples for future resumes and job interviews of how travel has impacted you.

To help you recall all your experiences, it is important to take time to journal or document these important moments before they fade from memory.

We understand that not everyone is a journaler, but sometimes, a little bit of prompting can help even the most shy of writers.

 Below are a series of various questions and prompts to help you reflect on your experiences.

- When I stepped off the plane, I felt _____.
- The first thing I noticed when I arrived at my destination was _____.
- What are a few similarities and differences compared to home.
- What is the biggest change in your daily routine?
- _____ has been in the news of my host country lately. Local people feel _____ about it.
- Describe an interesting conversation you've had this week.
- My favorite word that I've learned in the local language is _____.
- What is the strangest food you've eaten?
- My favorite song lately is _____.
- My most memorable experience so far has been _____.
- Describe your bedroom & accommodations.
- My top 5 moments this week were _____.
- What was your most embarrassing cross-cultural communication moment?
- My favorite place that I have visited so far is _____.
- What was the best language experience you've had so far?
- Describe an obstacle you overcame.
- I started to feel "at home" in my host country when _____.
- Find a local busy coffee shop and describe the scene around you.
- If I could share one piece of advice with a future traveler, it would be _____.

When traveling, you might assign more significance to our everyday experiences than when you are at home. Traveling can make the little things in life feel electric and exciting! By keeping written documentation (not just Snapchats or photos) of your experience you are able to revisit these special moments, as well as have documentation of how you have grown personally.





Welcome home! How does it feel to return to your family and friends after your travels abroad?

Returning home can sometimes pose some of the biggest challenges of an overseas adventure, and this section will help you understand how you might be feeling during this re-entry stage of travel.

In this section you will:

- Learn about Re-Entry and Reverse Culture Shock
- Understand the Top 10 Challenges Upon Returning Home
- Review the Phases of the Re-entry Process
- Complete the “Processing My Re-Entry Feelings” Exercise
- Complete the “Sound Biting My Experience” Exercise
- Revisit your S.M.A.R.T. goal

“Once you have travelled, the voyage never ends, but is played out over and over again in the quietest chambers. The mind can never break off from the journey.

— Pat Conroy



As you adjust back to life at home, you may hear a lot of people talking about re-entry. Re-entry is the process of returning home after spending time traveling.

The traditional view of this final stage in your travels has focused mainly on the emotional challenges that come with seeing your home community or country again after being abroad.

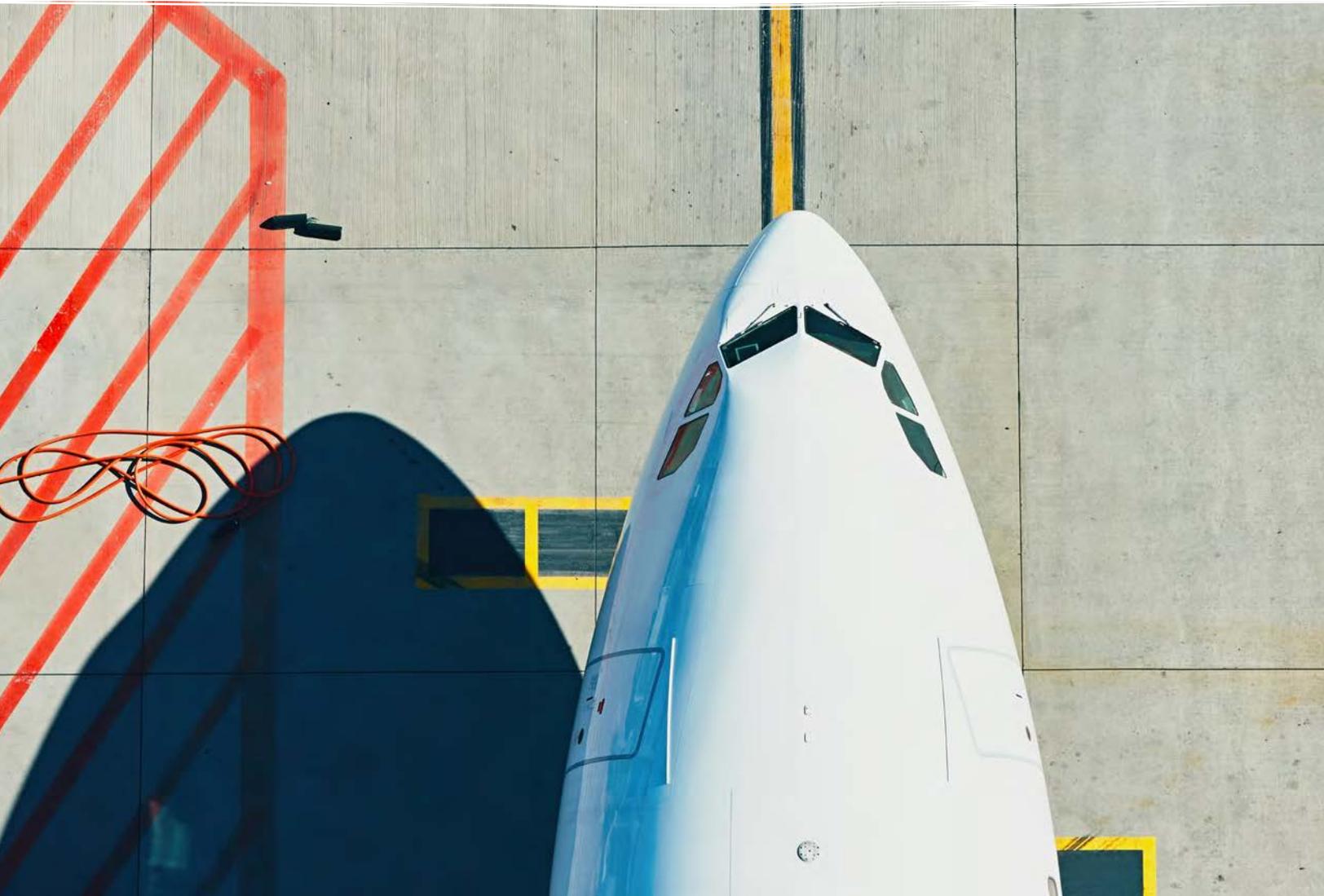


You shouldn't have to compartmentalize yourself into your "Travel Self" and "Back Home Self." The importance of re-entry is learning how to continue to grow and use your overseas experiences in your day-to-day routines, no matter where you are living.

Ways to Integrate Your Travel Experiences into Daily Life Back Home:

- Integrate new skills from your travels into your academic and/or professional life
- Create meaningful connections with your local community through global leadership
- Seek new ways to embody the global understanding that you experienced abroad

You might also consider talking with other Greenheart Travel alumni about their re-entry experiences in our Alumni Facebook Group.



Here is a list of re-entry challenges to be aware of as you settle into life back home.

1. Boredom

Returning home can feel underwhelming after traveling and living abroad. While old routines may be comforting, it's natural to miss the excitement of living abroad.

2. “No One Wants To Listen”

For those that haven't had a chance to travel overseas, it can be hard to relate to your international adventures. Have patience and be understanding while sharing your stories.

3. You Can't Explain

Relaying your experience coherently is difficult, but it's important to give yourself time to reflect. Return to your journal and exercises to help you articulate the impact your travels had on you.

4. Reverse Homesickness

Just as you may have missed home when you arrived in your host country, it is natural to experience reverse homesickness where you miss the people, places and things you were used to abroad.

5. Relationships Have Changed

It is inevitable that when you return home, you will notice that some relationships may have changed. Just as your opinions or attitudes may have evolved while abroad, people at home have been experiencing daily encounters that can shift perspectives.

6. People View You Differently

Change is hard to navigate, and if relationships are built on certain understandings, new habits can sometimes be confusing or upsetting. It is helpful to reflect on your “Multi-Cultural Self” exercise you completed prior to traveling. How you saw yourself prior to your trip might have shifted since you returned and can offer insight into how dynamics within certain relationships might need to adjust.

7. Miscommunications with Friends and Family

You may have picked up some new phrases or a different sense of humor or a new means of showing affection that you want to bring home to your new routines. While it is natural to want to share what you have learned during your time abroad, it is important to be mindful of others' reaction.

8. Feelings of Alienation

When day-to-day life returns to normal, you can feel alienated and develop a tendency to see the faults in your society that you may never have noticed before. Just as you observed your host country's culture with a balanced and curious perspective, the same perspective can be applied to your reflections of your community culture back home.

9. Inability To Apply New Knowledge and Skills

While the skills you developed may not be immediately relevant to your academic or professional settings, reviewing your S.M.A.R.T. goal can help articulate what you have learned while traveling and how you can take the initiative to use these new skills at school or at work.

10. Shoeboxing

To avoid having to compartmentalize your travel experience from your daily life, like storing souvenirs or photo albums in a shoebox under your bed, it's important to keep in contact with people abroad, continue your language practice, and attend cultural events in your community. Remember and honor the impact your travel experience had while integrating what you have learned into daily life.



To understand the changes that may happen to you over the next few weeks or months, it's helpful to have an overview of the possible phases you might experience as you get settled into life back home.

Remember the W-curve of culture shock you used to prepare for your travels? This is a similar concept. It's helpful to remember that you are not alone in your emotions, and that every traveler's experience of the re-entry process is unique.

Initial Excitement:

Enjoy being at home

Judgement Stage:

Nothing at home seems good;
finding fault

Realizaiton Stage:

Noticing significant changes
at home and in oneself

Reverse Culture Shock Frustration

Balanced Re-adaptation:

Integrating the experience
abroad with living at home

Source: *Styles of Re-Entry* Margaret D Pusch





Excitement Phase:

You are excited to see all of your family and friends again, you can't wait to go to your favorite restaurant, and sleep in your own bed. Much like the honeymoon phase you may have felt when you arrived at your host country, you are likely to have a honeymoon phase upon returning home.



Judgmental Phase:

After the initial excitement of being home wears off, you may be viewing loved ones, previous hobbies or routines in a different light. Mood swings are common at first and it is natural to feel defensive and judgmental. Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering your host culture, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home.



Realization Phase:

As you slowly adjust back to your "old" life, you will realize that the familiar will seem different. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological reactions to being home. You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar things from new perspectives. Since things may have changed (elected officials, slang, pop culture icons, etc.) you now have the opportunity to learn about your own culture.



Loss and Shock Phase:

There are aspects about your host culture that you probably miss deeply – the food, the people, the music. You are disconnected from the things that you now care about, and it may feel as though you are mourning. The sense of shock and despair is often compounded by the fact that you do not feel quite at peace in your home culture. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to your loved ones. As with any change, being aware of your emotions and attitude during this transition can shape the experience positively or negatively.



Re-Adaptation Phase:

Re-entry is a process that will take time, just like adjusting to a foreign culture. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is the surest way to re-establish relationships.

The key to facilitating your re-entry is stay connected to people who are going through or have gone through the same transition as you. There are so many people back home who can empathize and understand your concerns. Find a network you can go to for support as you adjust to life back home.



Below is a list of emotions. Check the ones that describe how you're feeling.

Then go back through the list with a highlighter to select the feelings that represent **how you want to feel in the future**.

Feelings List

overjoyed
confident
amazed
free
playful
courageous
energetic
excited
enthusiastic
bold
loved
comforted
liberated
adventurous

cheerful
sympathetic
serene
satisfied
receptive
challenged
certain
reassured
impulsive
unique
tenacious
secure
determined
relieved

intelligent
friendly
benevolent
at-ease
comfortable
content
alert
graceful
warm
amused
daring
capable
happy
anticipating

appreciated
consoled
delighted
eager
optimistic
joyful
hopeful
cared for
affectionate
patient
strong
inspired
yearning

proud
worthy
important
adored
alive
wanted
respected
empathic
zealous
vibrant
independent
concerned
peaceful

rebellious
appalled
resigned
lost
unpopular
moody
lethargic
gloomy
discontented
tired
indifferent
unsure
sick
worn-out
hopeless

envious
stuck
unhappy
bored
forlorn
disappointed
inadequate
disinterested
exhausted
panicked
weary
suspicious
terrified
fearful
aching

ineffectual
uncomfortable
confused
nervous
tense
worried
alarmed
annoyed
provoked
resentful
fed-up
frustrated
sad
desperate
heartbroken

angry
hurt
miserable
lonely
cynical
abandoned
shocked
trapped
horrified
afraid
bitter
sulky
reluctant
mixed-up
sensitive

rejected
guilty
embarrassed
anxious
dismayed
apprehensive
mad
torn
unloved
impatient
dependent
unimportant
regretful
self-conscious
upset
pitied





Processing My Re-Entry Feelings Exercise

Now that you have a baseline of your emotions, take a few minutes each day to reflect on how your emotions may shift and morph in different situations. You might want to keep track of your re-entry feelings in a journal or day-planner, and ask yourself the following two questions each day:

- How am I feeling today?
- What can I do today to feel how I want to feel?

Processing your emotions can be exhausting, and it's common for alumni to rely on family or friends to help cope with their re-entry experience. To empower both yourself and others in supporting you during any re-entry challenges, it helps to answer the questions below.

1. What you need in terms of re-entry support?

Do you need someone to vent to? Do you want someone to laugh with you? Do you need someone to help you daydream about your next adventure?

Write down a few things that you need below:

2. Who are the people you could go to for support?

List the names of family members, friends, colleagues, teachers, therapists, etc. that would be able and willing to support you.



Now combine your answers to complete the following sentence:

When I need _____, I will go to _____.

For example, "When I need to connect with other travelers who can empathize with what I'm feeling, I will go to Greenheart Travel's Alumni Facebook group."





Sound Biting My Experience Exercise: Reflecting on Your Travels

To help you stay connected to your travels during your re-entry phase, it can be fun to reflect on your memories abroad. This exercise will give you the chance to highlight specific memories and note what you learned from those experiences.

Note your top memory in each area.

Biggest cultural mistake:

Funniest moment; Scariest experience:

Most thrilling memory:

Most moving experience:

An important relationship:

A trip I took:

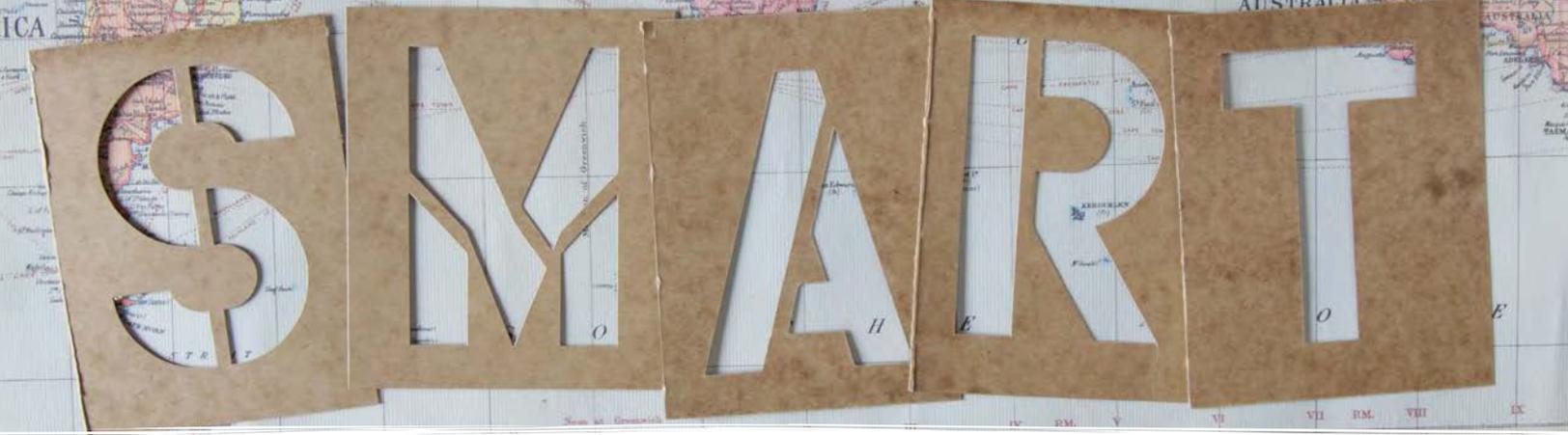
Choose ONE Memory and Give the Highlights

Focusing on one memory, write down the top 3 - 4 highlights or points you want to make.

Summarize and Generalize

Summarize and generalize about the experience. Explain what you took away from the experience and what you learned about yourself, human nature, and/or interacting across cultures.





Revisiting My S.M.A.R.T. Goal

To circle all the way back to when you started preparing to travel abroad, it's time to revisit your S.M.A.R.T. Goal. Often, it's not until a few months of being home that the full impact of how much you have grown and learned is realized.

We hope that your personal goal for traveling is helpful in being able to clearly state how this program impacted you and offer tangible examples of how you have grown and learned from your travels.

Below are a couple questions to help you reflect on your progress:

Specific — Are you clear on what you worked toward? Did you ever feel a little lost?

Meaningful — Do you still feel inspired and excited by your goal? Is it still relevant to you?

Action-Oriented — What steps have you taken over the past few months to work toward your goal?

Realistic — How do you feel about the challenge of your goal? Is it attainable as you wrote it before you left?

Trackable — How are you doing towards your goal? Has real progress been made? Did you achieve it?

Write down your reflections below:





Congratulations!

You are a citizen diplomat. You're motivated to meaningfully engage with the rest of the world. You want to develop deep connections and have a transformative experience. We hope that the Greenheart Atlas has provided you with the guidance and support necessary for you to make the most out of this time traveling abroad.

Ultimately, however, it comes down to you. It is only through you and your experiences abroad that positive cultural exchange is made possible. Regardless of the program that got you abroad, you are learning that as humans we share more similarities than we do differences, and both are worth celebrating.

As one final task in the Greenheart Atlas, we invite you to share your experiences abroad with anyone who will listen. Share stories about the kind stranger who helped you on the street or the meaningful interaction you had with someone who didn't even share the same language as you. Promote awareness, understanding, and inclusion.

We thank you, sincerely, for pursuing your passion for adventure and meaningfully traveling for a change. The lessons and reflections you take with you will forever remain vital to all of us.

All of our Best,

The Greenheart Travel Team