



HOMESICKNESS

Feeling Homesick? If you are not, or if you didn't experience a period of "down-time" during some point in your time overseas, you'd be unusual.

From every indication and from studies done on the phenomenon of overseas transitions, a low period is usually part of the process. Known as the "U-shape curve," the typical student tends to go through a "honeymoon" period at the beginning of his/her stay with all the fascination that newness and novelty brings. According to the U-curve model, this period of euphoria is short-lived, and can decline into a feeling of expectations not being met, or disillusionment (the bottom of the curve). This low period often coincides with pressures such as mid-terms, with limited contact with loved ones back home, or with frustration in learning a new language, for example. As one begins to adapt and learn more about the new culture, the climb from 'the depths' begins (adjustment), but not without an occasional slide backwards.

One way to feel better is to take excellent care of yourself. The simple habits of getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and regularly exercising can make a big difference in your mood. Further, try not to be too hard on yourself. Laughter can diffuse feelings of frustration or inadequacy that stem from the invariable mistakes you will make while learning the language or trying to adapt to the foreign culture. Also, be sure to continue doing activities and hobbies you enjoy back home. Seek out sports, music events, and cultural happenings which interest you as a way to meet locals by doing something you enjoy.

Finally, remember that your own attitude plays a big part in your enjoyment of the abroad experience. When you have a "cultural clash," it is your choice how you respond to the event. You can pull back, judge, and in the end withdraw and isolate yourself, or you can be open, curious and ask questions, thereby immersing yourselves further into understanding the new culture.