

The top ten re-entry challenges as rated by University Students:

1. **Boredom** - After all the newness and stimulation of your time abroad, a return to family, friends and old routines (however nice and comforting) can seem very dull.
2. **"No One Wants to Hear"** - One thing you can count on upon your return: no one will be interested in hearing about your adventures as you will be in sharing those experiences. Be brief, wait for them to ask you the questions. They will if they're really interested. Turn it around and ask them about what's been happening with them.
3. **You Can't Explain** - Even when given a chance to explain all the sights you saw and feelings you had while studying abroad, it is likely to be a bit frustrating to relay them coherently.
4. **Reverse "Homesickness"** - Feelings of loss are an integral part of international sojourns and must be anticipated and accepted as a natural result of study abroad.
5. **Relationships have Changed** - It is inevitable that some relationships with friends and even family will have changed. The best preparation is flexibility, openness, minimal preconceptions, and tempered optimism.
6. **People see Wrong Changes** - Sometimes people may concentrate on small alterations in your behavior or ideas and seem threatened or upset by them. To avoid or minimize them, monitor yourself and be aware of the reactions of those around you.
7. **People Misunderstand** - People will misinterpret your words or actions in such a way that communication is difficult. Be aware of how you may look to others and how your behavior is likely to be interpreted.
8. **Feelings of Alienation/Critical Eyes** - Sometimes the reality of being back home is not as natural or enjoyable as the place you had constructed as your mental image. Feelings of alienation and being critical often follow. Mental comparisons are fine, but keep them to yourself until you regain your cultural balance.
9. **Inability to Apply New Knowledge and Skills** - Many returnees are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, linguistic and practical coping skills that appear unnecessary or irrelevant. To avoid ongoing annoyance: adjust to reality as necessary, change what is possible, be patient, be creative, and above all use the cross-cultural adjustment skills you acquired abroad to assist your own re-entry.
10. **Loss/Compartmentalization of Experience** - Being home, coupled with the pressures of school family and friends, often combine to make returnees worried that somehow they will "lose" the experience. You do not have to let that happen. Maintain your contacts. Talk to people who have experiences similar to yours. Practice your skills. Remember and honor both your hard work and the fun you had while abroad.

(Bruce LaBrack, School of International Studies, University of the Pacific)