

Facilitator:
Millie C. Audas

LIST OF BASIC AMERICAN VALUES

(From: The Values Americans Live By,
L. Robert Kohls)

1. Personal Control Over the Environment/Responsibility
2. Change Seen as Natural and Positive
3. Time and Its Control
4. Equity/Fairness
5. Individualism/Independence
6. Self-Help/Initiative
7. Competition
8. Future Orientation
9. Action/Work Orientation
10. Informality
11. Directness/Openness/Honesty
12. Practicality/Efficiency
13. Materialism/Acquisitiveness
14. One-religion Orientation
15. Volunteerism

Human Family

Maya Angelou

I note the obvious differences
in the human family
Some of us are serious
Some thrive on comedy

Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity
and others claim they really live
the real reality

The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white

I've sailed upon the seven seas
and stopped in every land,
I've seen the wonders of the world
not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women
called Jane & Mary Jane,
but I've not seen any two
who really were the same

Mirror twins are different
although their features jibe
and lovers think quite different thoughts
while lying side by side

We love and lose in China
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same

I note the obvious differences
between each sort & type,
but we are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

From Office of
International Programs
University of Oklahoma

The Adjustment Process

There is no reason to believe that adjusting to life in a foreign country is going to be fundamentally different from other adjustments you have already made. Every time you moved, changed schools or jobs, or travelled you underwent an adjustment process. The adjustment you will need to make to live in a new country will be similar in many respects. New physical conditions will require you to learn how to provide the goods and services you need to be comfortable, such as food, transportation and recreation. New friends and associates will have to be encountered and their respect and affection won through mutual understanding. In those instances where the new environment lacks something you have been accustomed to, you will need to develop substitutes or learn to do without. Where you discover unpleasant aspects of the new situation, you will have to seek alternatives to them or ways to avoid such aspects. You have gone through this type of adjustment before and you can do it again.

Because it is a process you have already experienced, probably many times, it is useful to recall how "adjusting" happened - what took place, how it felt while it was in progress, and how you were able to achieve a successful adjustment.

Stage #1: The "Newness" Stage

For most of us, a new place seems interesting and full of adventure and fun at first. One is excited and eager to try new foods, new things, and happy to meet new people. During the first days and weeks almost everyone is friendly, helpful and understanding. Even when you cannot understand someone's English, or other language, you'll use your best weapon (HUMOR) and laugh at yourself. In short, you will feel happy to finally be at your destination after months of pre-departure preparation.

Stage #2: The Culture Shock" Stage

When the newness wears off and when your classes get more difficult, you may become confused and discouraged. At this stage, you might miss your family, friends, and special food you cannot have there and all this may cause feelings of isolation and homesickness.

Discouragement, anxiety, or negative feelings about your academic programs and social life might occur at this time. Your concerns may manifest themselves in changes in appetite, sleep, need for privacy and ability to concentrate. You may feel a loss of importance or prestige that you enjoyed as members of your community at home. You may even feel "abandoned" by your host institution, U.S. family and friends due to lack of communication.

This is a difficult stage. To overcome feelings of homesickness and discouragement, we suggest you talk to friends and acquaintances. Most foreign schools have an International Student Service Office, and talking to one of the counselors there and participating in the many activities for international and U.S. students will help alleviate this homesickness. Remember, there are others there who have experienced homesickness so finding someone to "lend an ear" can help you through this stage. Be patient with yourself. Allow yourself time to grow and adjust to your new way of life.

It is important that you remember that this stage will pass. We have seen many students come through it successfully. Remember that, even if it may not seem like it at the time, your family and friends believe in you and what you're doing.

Stage #3: The Understanding Stage

Before too long, you will recover your interest in the program because of increasing self-assurance. You will have greater familiarity with the campus and you will know your professors, classmates and others at the university and in town. The cultural differences will no longer cause you frustration or confusion. At this stage, you will feel excited to strive toward your academic goals and personal satisfaction.

Stage #4: The Adjustment Stage

In this stage of the intercultural adjustment process, you will focus much more on all the gains of your new experiences than on the loss of what is familiar. Your satisfaction and self-confidence will continue to grow. You will become part of the university community by strong participation in academic and extracurricular activities.

The cycle of four stages may be repeated in varying degrees each time you undertake some new activity: a new semester, a new course, a new special friend, a new job, or a new place to live.

ADJUSTMENT WHEN YOU RETURN HOME

The cycle we discussed, much to your surprise, will occur again when you return home (re-entry adjustment). Although you will be happy to return to your family and friends, you will also miss your newly acquired friends. Your family may not understand the new you: the learned professional independent you. This re-

entry adjustment might be all the more difficult because you will not expect to feel like a stranger at home. This, too, is part of The study abroad experience - learning to incorporate and/or utilize your study abroad experience into your future goals and plans. This is something all students should think about even before departing.

One way to make the most of your experience when you return is to tell others about your adventure! You can do this by talking to small groups, helping with study abroad fairs, promoting study abroad at your home institution or simply by sharing your experience one on one. Here at OU, students who have studied abroad have the opportunity to become part of an organization developed just for study abroad alumni. This organization is called USAAC (University Study Abroad Alumni Council). There are always plenty of ways to stay active in study abroad through this organization.

Many students return abroad to work or teach or seek job opportunities in international fields. Whatever your future goals may be, you will be more prepared for these opportunities as a result of your study abroad experience.

