

**Topic:** Cultural Adjustment  
(International Catholic Migration Commission, Overseas Processing Entity,  
Zagreb)

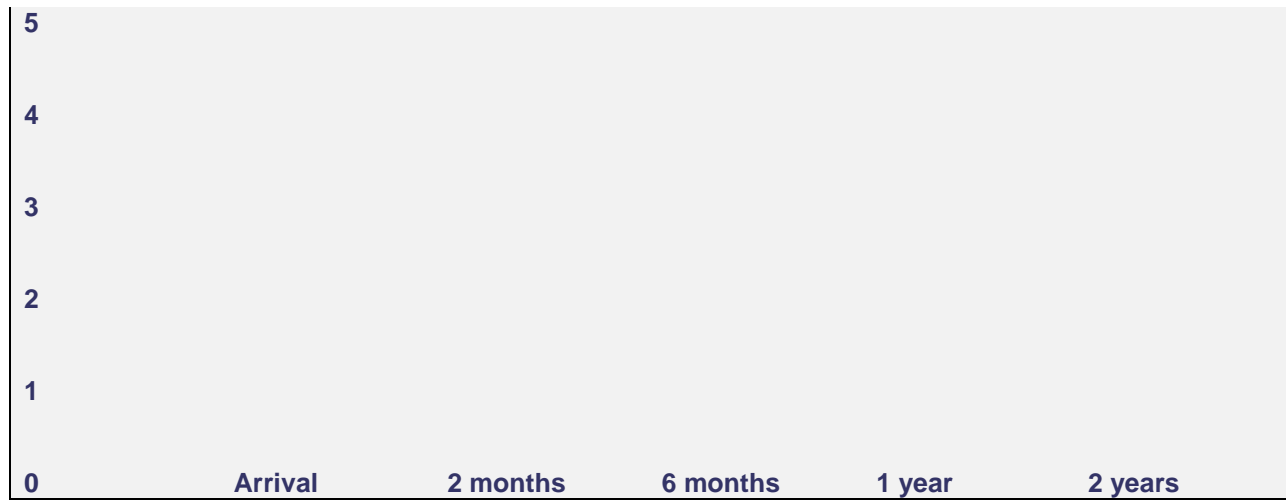
**Activity:** Stages of Culture Shock (Knowledge of Culture Shock/Coping Skills)

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<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Resettlement is a complex psychological and emotional process. Most refugees experience culture shock as part of this process. Understanding the stages of culture shock will help participants to prepare for the symptoms they may experience.</p> <p>This activity introduces participants to the four stages of culture shock.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Given two stories about newcomers in America, participants will be able to identify the stages of culture shock to the extent that they can list ways of coping with each of the stages.</p>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case study stories (included)</li><li>• 2 markers in different colors</li><li>• A board or large sheet of unlined paper, 1 meter in length</li></ul>
<b>Practice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Draw a graph on the board or a sheet of unlined paper as illustrated in the sample graph. The vertical line on the left represents the intensity of the feelings. The horizontal line on the bottom represents how long the people have lived in the U.S.</li><li>2. Ask participants to give you a word which describes deep sadness. Write this word beside the "0" on the graph (e.g., "devastated." Ask participants to give you a word which describes the greatest happiness one can feel (e.g., "ecstatic"). Write this word beside the "5" on the graph.</li><li>3. Begin to tell the story of a Bosnian who resettled in the U.S. Pause throughout the story and ask the participants to describe how the character may have felt in various situations and to give the feeling a rating somewhere between 0 and 5. Use a colored marker to plot the feelings at each pause point.</li><li>4. As they provide a numerical rating for the character's feelings, draw a continuous line on the graph so that the ups and downs of the character's emotional state are illustrated on the graph. List these feelings under the horizontal line of the graph. The feelings should be written where they correspond with the line that the teacher draws while telling the story.</li><li>5. Repeat the process with the second story, but use a different colored pen on the same graph.</li></ol>
<b>Debrief</b>	<p>Focus on comparing the charts of the two characters and discuss why there are similarities and differences. Summarize the stages of culture shock. Ask the participants to list what they can do in the U.S. in order to cope with each of these stages.</p>

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### Sample Graph



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## Culture Shock – Case Studies

Note to the Instructor: As you tell story A and B to the participants, you will be charting Samir's reactions and feelings in story A and Aida's feelings during the telling of story B. It is important that you don't read the story aloud. It should sound as if you are having a casual conversation with friends.

### Story A:

Before coming to the U.S., Samir did not attend C.O. class. He loved American television shows such as Baywatch and Santa Barbara so he thought he knew enough about Americans and their lifestyle. For him, the U.S. is like paradise on earth and he is looking forward to receiving his lovely apartment, his first car and money for food and clothes.

*Pause and ask the participants to describe and rate Samir's feelings on a scale from 0 to 5.*

When Samir arrives in the U.S., he is given temporary housing in a poor neighborhood. His neighbors come from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Some of them are immigrants like him, others have lived in the United States for generations. The vocabulary he learned while watching Baywatch doesn't seem to be very useful and he can't communicate well enough to do even simple things such as ask for directions.

*Pause and ask the participants to describe and rate Samir's feelings on a scale from 0 to 5.*

Samir has been in the States for two months and, instead of shopping for clothes and a car, Samir is spending his time learning ESL and looking for jobs as a cleaner or in a factory - any job that doesn't require more than a basic knowledge of English. The difficulty with language plus the cultural differences mean that even doing simple things take a great deal of energy and thought. Compared to this, life in Bosnia doesn't seem so bad after all.

*Pause and ask the participants to describe and rate Samir's feelings on a scale from 0 to 5.*

Samir finds a job in a candy factory that pays \$6.00 per hour. For the next nine months he works during the day and studies English at school in the evenings. He moves into a new apartment that is a bit more expensive, although still quite basic. He has already created problems with his neighbors because he likes to listen to music pretty loud.

*Pause and ask the participants to describe and rate Samir's feelings on a scale from 0 to 5.*

By the end of his first year in the U.S., Samir is able to negotiate a loan with the local bank so that he can buy a car. He makes friends with a few Americans and they go to local clubs together.

*Pause and ask the participants to describe and rate Samir's feelings on a scale from 0 to 5.*

It's now two years later and Samir has received two raises and has a better understanding of American customs and can meet all his daily needs in English. He now knows that there are no instant successes and that it takes hard work to earn more money, meet new people, and build a career.

Now he is making plans to continue his education at a local college so that he can find a job similar to what he was doing in Bosnia before the war. He is saving for college and every year he saves some money so he can drive to the national park in his state.

*Pause and ask the participants to describe and rate Samir's feelings on a scale from 0 to 5.*

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## Story B:

Aida is 27, divorced, and has 2 children. is accepted for resettlement in Boise, Idaho. To prepare herself she tries to read English magazines and practices her English with some of the staff at the refugee camp where she lives. She reads the "Dobro Dosli." She attends a four day C.O. class and learns about some of the problems she may have and ways of solving them. Three months after attending C.O., Aida is notified that she is flying to the U.S.

*Pause and ask participants to describe Aida's feelings when she receives her notification for departure. Rate them on a scale from 0 to 5.*

Aida's relatives in the U.S. find temporary accommodation for her and her family. Although it is more comfortable than the refugee camp, she had hoped for something better. She knew that she should look for a job but without good English language skills she has to work in the laundry room of a hotel. She finds it difficult to understand Americans sometimes. Everyone acts open and friendly but they don't invite her anywhere. Her colleagues make jokes that she doesn't understand, and she can only express simple thoughts and feelings in English.

*Pause and ask participants to describe Aida's feelings and rate them on a scale from 0 to 5.*

During the year, her English improves and she is able to express herself and understand what is being said without trying to translate every word. She meets the mothers of her children's friends and they have coffee together while their children play. Her children are doing well at school. She finds a part-time job as a shop assistant in a local drug store. She begins to study part-time at a community college. She hopes to get a full-time job in the accounting department at the head office of the drugstore in about two years.

*Pause and ask participants to describe Aida's feelings and rate them on a scale from 0 to 5.*

In two years Aida is offered a job in the head office and now she is determined to get a bachelor's degree. She takes aerobics classes at the local gym so that she can get some exercise. She still sees her American friends but finds it more difficult now that she is working full-time, studying and raising her children. However, she buys a car and sometimes she and her friends and their children go away for the weekend. Every year she gets two weeks of paid vacation, so she and the children drive to California to visit her relatives.

*Pause and ask participants to describe Aida's feelings and rate them on a scale from 0 to 5.*

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