

Cross-Cultural Transition (Part 2)

The four phases international students may experience during cross-cultural transition are:

- 1) Tourist Phase
- 2) Disintegration Phase
- 3) Reintegration Phase
- 4) Adaptation Phase

Phase 2: Disintegration Phase

In this phase, you may be feeling disappointed and irritated with the American culture. Cultural differences may be now viewed as a source of stress. You may be constantly comparing your own culture to American culture and feel frustrated with Americans' behaviors and different communication and life styles. The U.S. cultural norms may seem different from the way you know the world, which may lead to a sense of confusion. You may also feel of lack of control, fatigue, anxious, or depressed. All of these are common reactions of stress. This is why this phase is called "Disintegrated Phase."

Phase 3: Reintegration Phase

In this phase, you are gradually adjusting to be living in the American culture and searching your position to settle down. You may try new things and find out if it works or does not for you. You may be learning more and more about the American culture and also utilizing various strategies to cope with stress (e.g., exercise, listening to music, eating your favorite food, chatting with families or friends, etc.). You may be gradually gaining back your sense of control. This is why this phase is called "Reintegration Phase."

Phase 4: Adaptation Phase

In this phase, you may settle down your position in how you relate to American culture. By settling down, you may feel a greater sense of stability and control, which is considered that you are adapted to the changes. This is why this phase is called "Adaptation Phase."

Your adaptation style may be one or two of the followings or somewhere in between, depending on how you relate to your own culture and American culture. You may have different styles in your private life and public life or in specific areas.

- a) You follow American cultural norms, rather than your own cultural norms.
- b) You maintain your own cultural norms and distance yourself from American cultural norms.
- c) You integrate both of your own and American cultural norms together.
- d) You distance yourself from both your own cultural norms and American cultural norms.

Countless factors influence your experience in the transition. So, everyone's experience may be different. We, international students, can be great support for each other! Please talk to other international students. Yuka Kato is also happy to talk to you at the Coffee Hour. I am also planning to have a workshop about this topic soon.

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