

Key Factors for Successful Cultural Adjustment

- *Open-mindedness*
 - a. *Defined as the ability to keep one's opinions flexible and to be receptive to new stimuli.*
- *Sense of humor*
 - a. *Very important in an unfamiliar culture as there can be many things which lead one to feel embarrassed, get irritable, cry or become discouraged. The ability to "laugh things off" will help guard against despair.*
- *Ability to cope with failure*
 - a. *Critical because no one can reasonably be expected to succeed at everything when taking on a whole new way of life.*
- *Communicative*
 - a. *Being able and willing to try to communicate one's thoughts to others is an important skill for intercultural adaptation. (This is why knowing how to communicate basic needs and questions in Spanish is so important.)*
- *Flexibility & adaptability*
 - a. *Essential for tolerating the ambiguity of new situations and being able to respond to them in an open manner while keeping judgmental behavior to a minimum.*
- *Curiosity*
 - a. *Demonstrating a desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc is important because there are so many new things to be learned in order to adapt to a new cultural environment.*
- *Positive & realistic expectations*
 - a. *Helps to avoid chronic disappointment which can zap mental energy and slow the cultural adjustment process.*
- *Tolerance for differences & ambiguities*
 - a. *Necessary to maintain a positive regard and respect for others even when faced with a lack of full understanding.*
- *A strong sense of self & effective coping strategies*
 - a. *Provides the foundation necessary for dealing with personal anxiety throughout the cultural adjustment process.*

Common Symptoms of Problems with Cultural Adjustment

- *Excessive concern over cleanliness and food preparation*
 - a. *The notion that what is new and strange is “dirty” or will cause grave illness. (This could be in relation to food, drinking water/ dishes or bedding.)*
- *Excessive concerns over physical health so that minor aches and pains cause acute anxiety.*
- *Feelings of helplessness which causes a desire for over-dependence on someone of one’s own culture or nationality (e.g. supervisor or partner).*
- *Irritation over delay or minor frustrations out of proportion to their causes.*
- *Withdrawal and refusal to communicate in the new language.*
- *Intense longing to be back home in familiar surroundings.*
- *Strong desire to talk with members of social support network back home.*

