

Common Challenges Encountered by Study Abroad Returnees & Strategies to Help Deal with Them

Challenges	Strategies to help you deal with re-entry
<p>Friends and family at home do not seem interested in hearing about aspects of your experience that you feel are important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realize they may be adjusting to changes in you. Give some time for this adjustment. • Plan a special time for you to share photos or food from your experience. • Don't assume the opportunity for meaningful conversations will happen – make room for it to take place. Without a comparable experience, they may have difficulty understanding the depth of your stories. Be patient with them. • Write down your thoughts and feelings. It helps you to be able to process them even if you can't talk about them. • Seek others with similar experiences. • Give a presentation to community organizations. Write an article for your local or school newspaper. Be active!
<p>Friends and family may treat you as the same person you were before leaving. You want your relationship to change as a result of your changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They may be feeling uncertain about how you have changed or grown. Discuss your feelings about yourself and others with them. • Encourage positive changes in old relationships. Don't expect your friends to suggest seeing a new international film – especially if they never did before. Take the initiative and invite them. • Seek out relationships with people who are compatible with the new you.
<p>You may be anxious or apprehensive about your academic situation because the subjects you enjoyed studying abroad, including language, appear to have little relevance at home. You might also be confused about your educational future and career plans in light of new or uncertain goals and priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities and alternatives available to you by finding informal and non-academic ways to continue the study of your favorite subjects. • Take time to consider educational and career plans that include your new areas of interest. • Seek out the advice of your counselors and mentors.
<p>If you find that your attitudes and opinions have changed considerably during your stay abroad and are not widely shared in your home community, you may feel highly critical of your home country because you have new perspectives on it. Others might be critical of your "negative attitude."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to keep perspective on your feelings. Remember that your opinions and ideas may initially be greatly influenced by the host culture and may not represent your final balanced viewpoint. • Share your feelings with others but carefully choose situations in which to bring up controversial issues. • Continue to foster your ability to look at the world critically by reading and seeking out a diverse range of information, rather than fall into the trap of just thinking of things (politics in particular) negatively.
<p>You may become frustrated because people at home are uninterested in other peoples and cultures. Faced with this lack of concern, you might feel there aren't ways for you to take an active role in helping solve the problems of the world community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to generate local interests in other peoples and their concerns. • Use your special status as an intercultural traveler to educate others through private conversations or by public speeches and presentations. • Look at problems in your own community now that you have a new perspective. Become a change agent.