

# Culture Shock

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**A feeling of disorientation or confusion that occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one.**



## From U. Wisconsin-Madison:

<http://studentservices.engr.wisc.edu/international/cultureshock.html>

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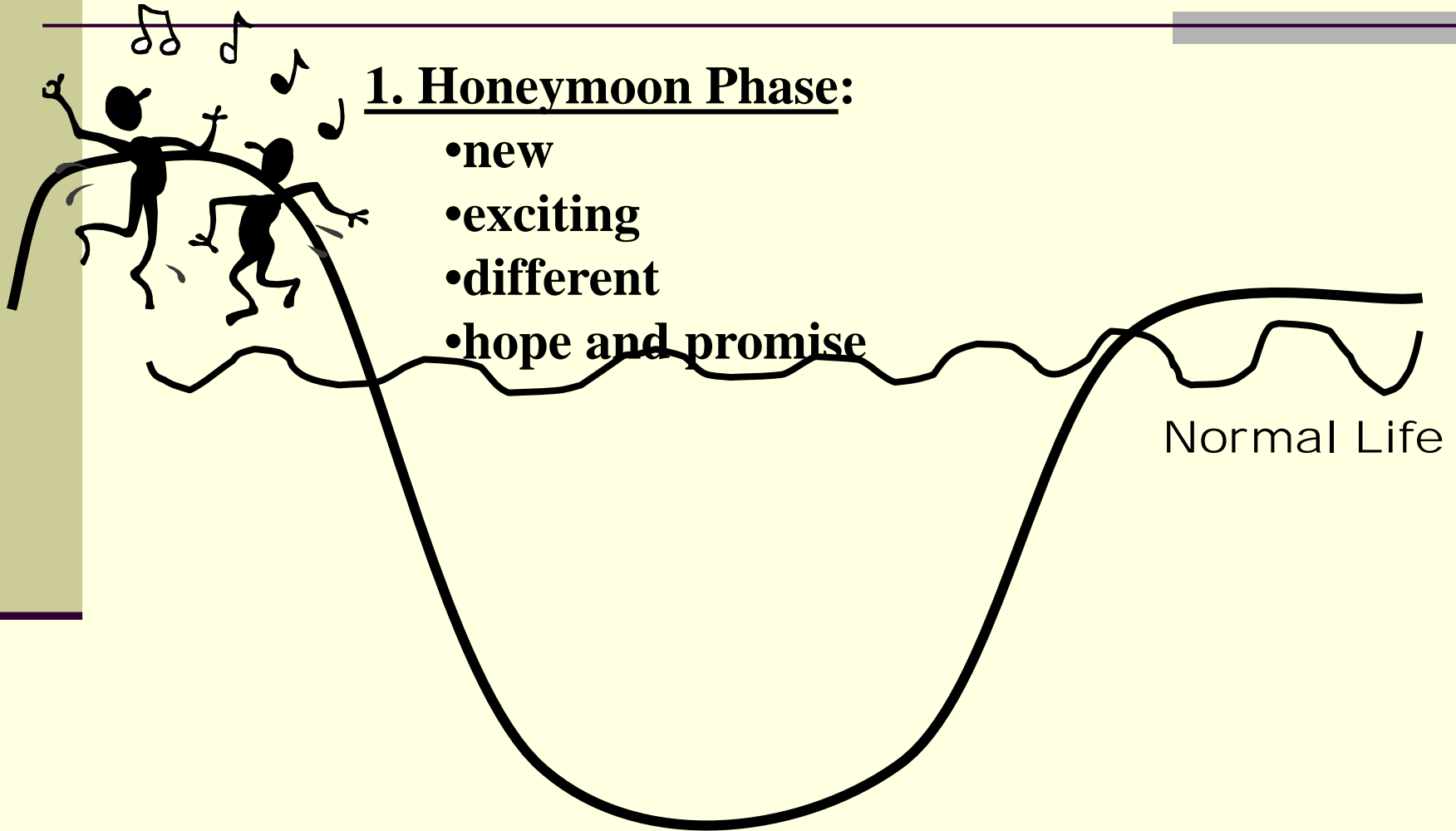
- "Culture shock", says anthropologist Kalvero Oberg, "is brought on by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situation of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people; when and how to give tips; how to give orders to servants; how to make purchases; when to accept and when to refuse invitations; when to take statements seriously and when not."
- "When an individual enters a strange culture," Dr. Oberg says, "all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him."

# Cultural Differences:

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- Language/accents
- Food
- Interacting with others e.g. greetings
- Personal space
- Sense of Humor
- Academic systems (e.g. being told what to take vs. choice of classes to sign up for)
- hierarchical societies/structure
- Classroom culture (formal/informal)
- Etc.

# Cultural Adjustment



# Cultural Adjustment

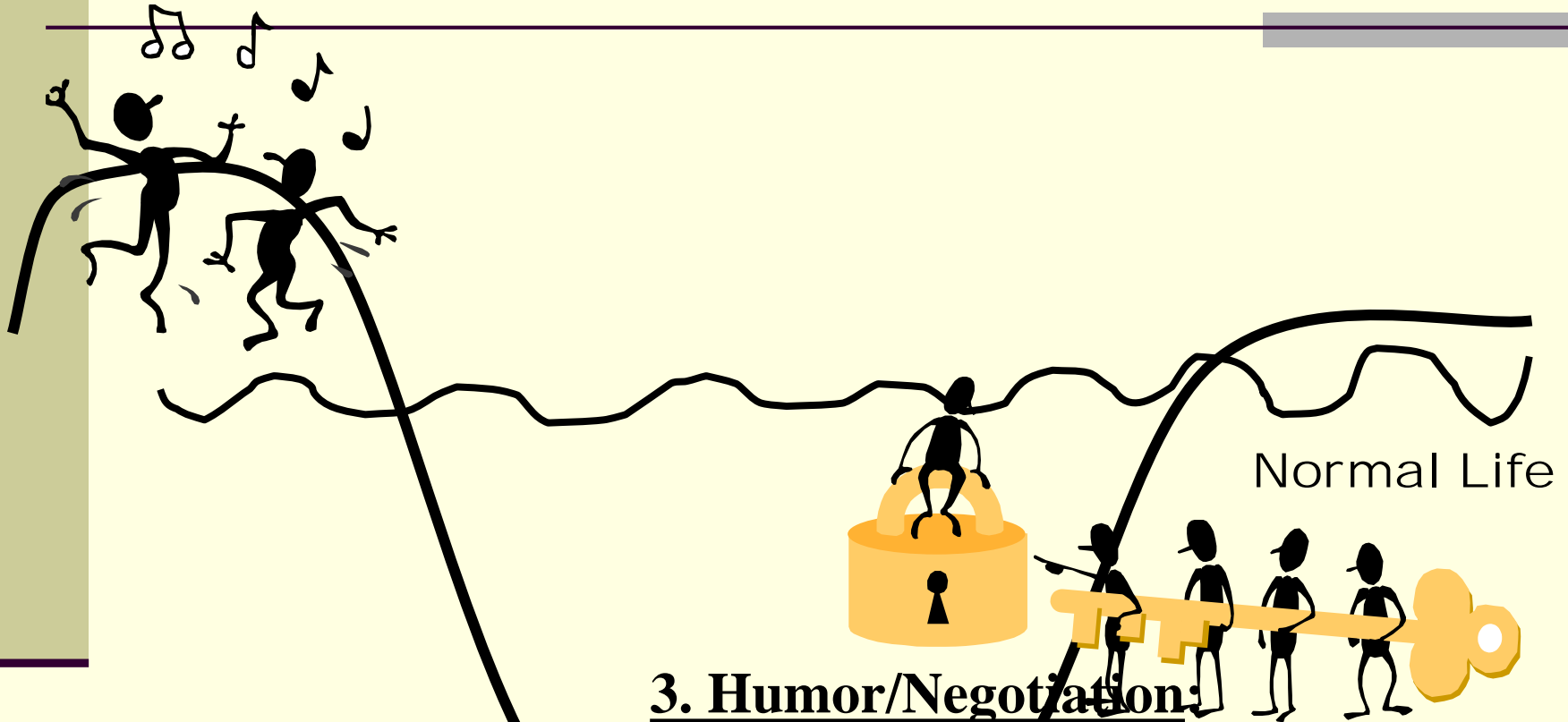
## 2. Hostility:

- homesickness
- different ways of behaving
- tiredness (language, etc.)
- different foods
- loneliness, sense of isolation
- depression
- irritability
- things taking more time to do/negotiate
- more prone to illnesses (colds, etc.)
- sometimes engenders more patriotism for home country

Normal Life



# Cultural Adjustment



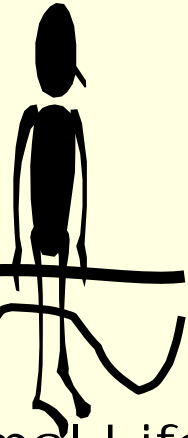
### 3. Humor/Negotiation:

- Starting to figure things out
- having social networks
- adjusting to US culture/way of life

# Cultural Adjustment

## 4. “Home”:

- functional
- well adjusted



Normal Life

# Coping Strategies:

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- **Keep a journal.**
- **Find a support group. Some ISSS programs:**
  - **Boulder Friends of International Students**
  - **International Coffee Hour**
  - **CU International and Wednesdays at Somewhere**
- **Keep in touch with Friends and Family at Home**
- **Being active and participating in e.g. International Festival, CU International, international student clubs, etc.**
- **Ask questions and Be Open.** Observe people closely to pick up subtle nuances about the culture. Ask questions if you don't understand something
- **Hobbies and outside activities.** Engage in hobbies or activities that interest you. All of these activities will help you better "see" the host culture.
- **Have some fun!**
- **Remind Self that this is temporary.**
- **Keep your sense of humor!**

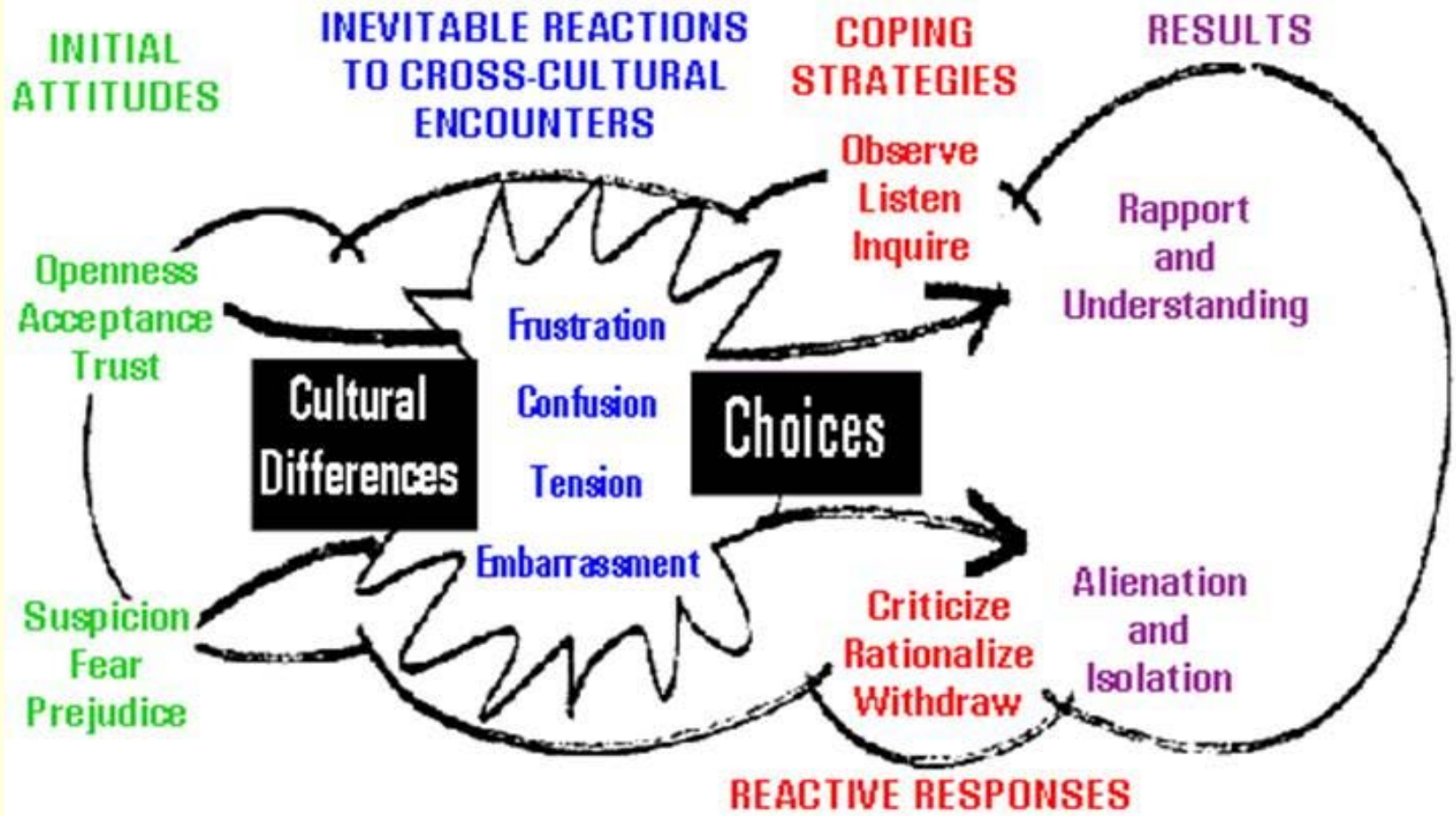


# From “Counseling International Students” by Nancy Arthur:

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“Coping skills that are usually effective for personal management may not be effective for coping in new cultural contexts. This can derail a sense of personal competency...Although international students may desire immediate relief from distressing symptoms, they cannot remove themselves from the host culture without giving up their student status. It may provide hope for international students to realize that culture shock is likely to dissipate once they have mastered competencies for understanding and responding to cues in the host environment”

<http://medicine.creighton.edu/projectculture/cultureshock.htm>



# Resources:

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- **The Silent Language, The Hidden Dimension, Beyond Culture, and The Dance of Life**, Edward T. Hall, Intercultural Press, 1959-83. An important collection of cross-cultural works.
- **The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning**, J. Daniel Hess, Intercultural Press, 1994.
- **Survival Kit for Overseas Living** by Robert L. Kohls, Intercultural Press, 1996.
- **Cross-Cultural Dialogues**, Intercultural Press, 1994.
- **The Art of Crossing Cultures**, Craig Storti, Intercultural Press, 1990.
- **American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective**, Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennett, 1991.
- **Students Abroad: Strangers at Home**, Martin, Kauffmann, and Weaver, Intercultural Press, 1992.
- **Intercultural Communication: a reader**, Samovar, Porter Wadsworth, 1998.
- **On Being Foreign, Culture Shock in Short Fiction**, Lewis, Jungman, Intercultural Press, 1996.
- **Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture**, Philip R. DeVita and James Armstrong, Wadsworth, 1993.
- **Culture Shock: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette**, Sally Taylor, Graphic Arts, 1997.
- **Counseling International Students: Clients from Around the World**, Edited by Nancy Arthur, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004