

# Adjusting to a new culture workshop



# Ice breaker: What's In A Name?

Things you may want to discuss...

Where does your name come from?

Do you like your name? Why or why not?

Do you know the meaning of your name?

Explain how you got your name.

Why did your parents give you your name?

Do you have any 'pet' names, cute names/nicknames your family or friends call you?

What do you know about your family name?

What were some interesting people and events in your family history?



# Follow-up discussion

Share anything interesting that you learned:

Are there common themes about the way people are named?

Are there big differences in the way people are named?

Was there any funny, clever, etc. story about how someone got their name?

Or what someone's name means?

# Cultural adjustment and change

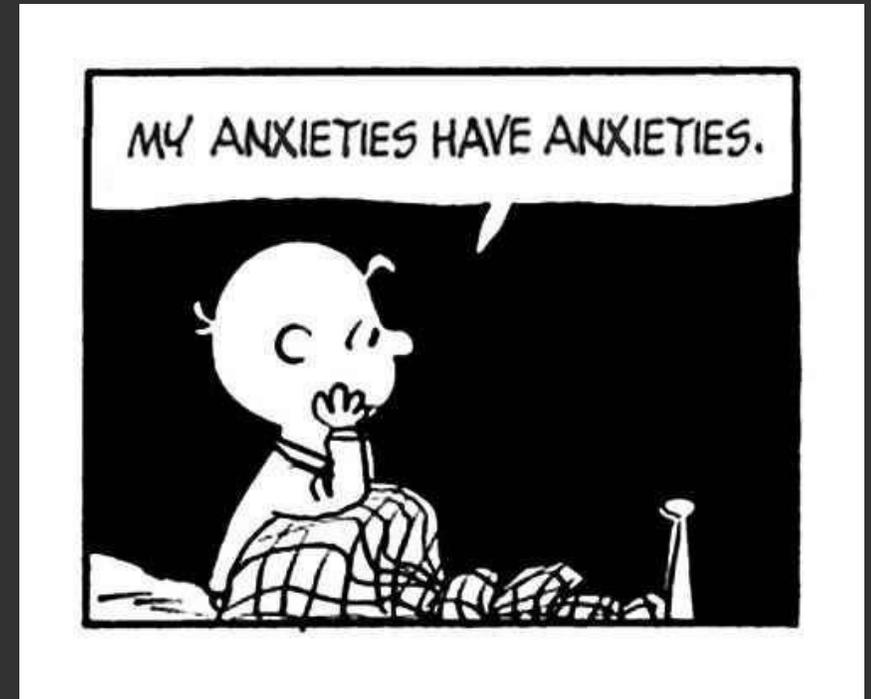
**Self-Assessment Survey: How ready are you to adjust to another culture? How well do you. . .**

- understand the degree to which you are conscious of similarities and differences between your own and other cultures?
- understand your awareness of a variety of national and cultural perspectives that may impact your ability to have a successful experience in another culture?
- understand some of the qualities that may enhance cultural adjustment?

# Transition shock: How Do You Respond To Change?

## Symptoms of Transition Shock

- excessive concern over cleanliness and health
- feelings of helplessness and withdrawal
- fear of personal harm, being robbed, being cheated
- physiological stress reactions - anxiety
- glazed stare
- irritability
- being homesick – desire for home and old friends



# Transition shock

## Responses to Transition Shock

- Cognitive inconsistency
  - beliefs and values overturned by exterior change
  - defend against threat to your worldview
  - previous high expectations of exotic overseas life is crushed
  - why did I come here?

# Typical responses to change / transition

Fight – Exploratory Phase	Proceed from early enthusiasm and high expectations to a fight stance. Self-protective mechanisms are engaged.
Flight – Crisis Phase	We may become discouraged, bewildered, withdrawn, and may choose flight as the most effective defense mechanism available.
Filter – Recovery and Adjustment Phase	We lower our defenses and absorb new stimuli.
Flex – Accommodation Phase	We give up defending our worldview and flex in our perspective on the new environment. Flex implies adaptation not a surrender of worldview.

# Three different kinds of adaptation

- Monistic adaptation – either we “go native,” submerge ourselves in the host culture – or we retreat to the safety of people from our own country
- Pluralistic adaptation – we maintain our own own culture and assimilate the host culture becoming bicultural.
- Interactionist Adaptation – we choose portions of both cultures and become a mixture of each

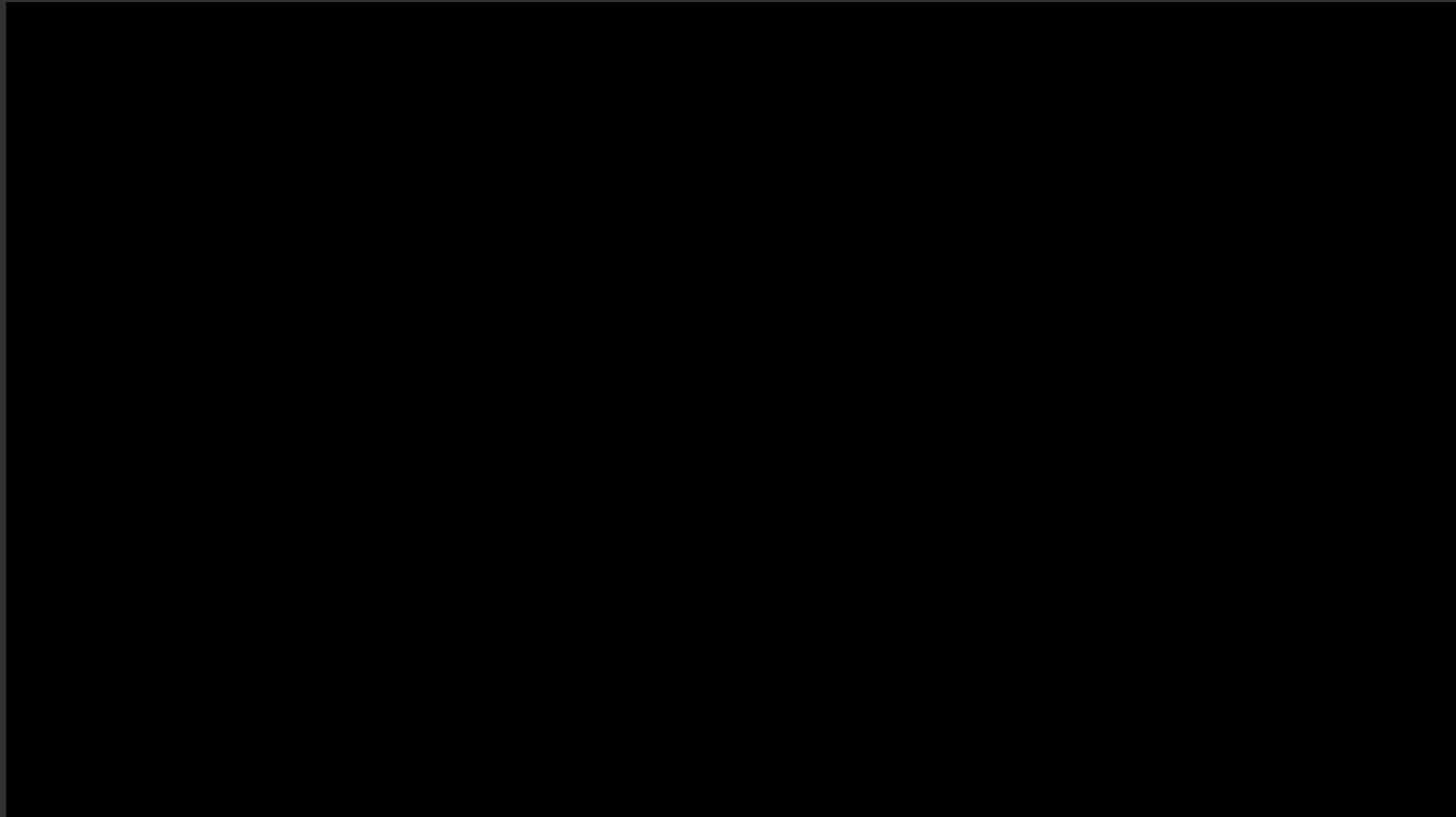


# How to limit the effects of culture shock

- Be self-aware
- Be non evaluative/non judgmental
- Develop cultural empathy
- Become comfortable with cognitive complexity



# Words of Wisdom



# Transition *do's* and *don'ts*

## About Communication

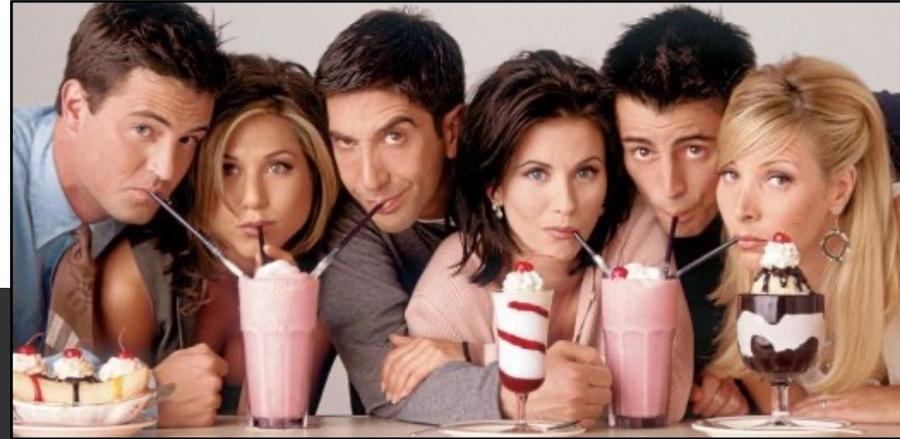
- Greetings—how to address people: professors, friends, strangers
- Sense of personal space, “invading one’s space”, Americans tend to be very sensitive about space, be aware of the other person’s reaction
- Cleanliness is an important matter for some people: brushing teeth; washing hair; using soap, lotion, deodorant (but not too much); frequent laundering of clothing, daily bathing
- People may seem to ask a lot of questions; often they are seeking to help or assist
- Some will be very direct in their communications - opinionated, passionate; others will be more indirect—the sugar-coating culture
- No means No; there are fewer opportunities to negotiate than in other cultures
- Telling the Truth vs. Saving face
- Appropriate/inappropriate topics may depend on the situation:
  - “Safe topics”: the weather, classes, jobs, sports, movies, fashion, travel
  - Topics for friends or people you know well: money, religion, politics
- Be aware that not all humor is cross-cultural
- Hand gestures and body language may mean different things





## About Time

- Be punctual or be on time. To be late is rude. You need to show respect/value when taking the time of others
- Focus is on the task, getting the job done. People have places to go, people to see, things to accomplish, agendas, timetables, deadlines, etc.
- Time is often referred to as something tangible: time is money, time is scarce
- Be on time for appointments and with class projects and work required as part of group projects
- But it is acceptable to be less rigid about time for some social situations such as arrival at a party that begins at 7 pm. It is not expected that you will arrive exactly at 7 pm



## About Relationships

- Niche friendships – it is typical for people in the United States to develop friendly relations with others in the classroom, at the gym, where they live or work and have one friend to study with and another to play tennis with and another to go to the movies with. There is potential to form friendships in study groups, student organizations, clubs
- Casual informal style to friendships: friend or acquaintance?
- Dating—some people date many individuals before or instead of engaging in more committed relationships; not uncommon or inappropriate for someone to date more than one person at a time or date many people over time before making a commitment to one individual
- It is never appropriate to pursue someone who expresses no interest in developing or continuing a friendship
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender Identities-acceptance may be different than in your country
- Sexual activity, STDs, Date rape, use the Health Center and or Counseling Center as a resource

## About Sexual Harassment

- Sexual harassment is not acceptable
  - Sexual assault is criminal
  - ‘Yes Means Yes’ – know what defines consent

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=47&v=xLdElcv5qqc>

- Severe academic and criminal consequences for violations
- Do not take advice about sex in a dating relationship from U.S. television programs or Hollywood movies.
- Ask U.S. friends or seasoned international students for guidance on what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior.
- As confidential and privileged resources, Hendricks Chapel and the Counseling Center are able to provide students the maximum privacy under federal and state law. The staff (counselors and chaplains) provide support services, counseling and advocacy on cases related to any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, relationship violence, sexual harassment, stalking and cyberbullying.



## About Diversity and Individualism

- You are expected to treat people equally and with respect regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, or sexual orientation, faith, religion
- If you treat people with respect, you can expect to be treated with respect
- U.S. society is based on individualism and respect for the individual; status and hierarchy play less of a role than in some other cultures





## About the Law

- High regard for the law: in general, things are not negotiable—it is illegal to bribe a police officer or government official
- Legal drinking age for alcoholic beverages is **21**. There are stiff penalties for Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) and Driving Under the Influence of alcohol (DUI)
- Possession of illegal drugs is a criminal offense at any age. A list of illegal drugs is available here, [www.justice.gov/dea/index.htm](http://www.justice.gov/dea/index.htm)
- Legal problems can affect your visa status
- Some people on college campuses are passionate about causes. If you want to be involved, don't do anything to jeopardize your legal status.
- Legal contracts such as signing a lease for an apartment are civil agreements that are binding
- Scams – government offices (IRS, USCIS, ICE) will not call you on the phone and/or require you to wire money to avoid jail or deportation. If the caller demands immediate action while you are still on the phone, this is a scam!  
Scammers are skilled at using threats to manipulate you. Do not become a victim!



## About Religion

- The United States has many diverse religious traditions. Religion should not be a stumbling block as you experience life here. If you are religious, you should be able to find a temple, mosque, church, or other place of worship of your own choosing where you can feel comfortable
- You should respect those who practice another religion or no religion

# Possible on-campus resources

- \*Hendricks Chapel: <http://hendricks.Syr.Edu/>
- Health Services: <http://health.Syr.Edu/>
- \*Counseling Center: <http://counselingcenter.Syr.Edu/>
- Psychological Services Center: <http://psychology.Syr.Edu/psychologicalservicescenter/index.Html>
- Student Legal Services: <http://www.Studentlegal.Net/>
- Office of Student Assistance: <http://www.Syr.Edu/currentstudents/studentassistance.Html>
- Slutzker Center for International Services: <http://international.Syr.Edu/>
- Office of Multicultural Affairs: <http://multicultural.Syr.Edu/>
- LGBT Resource Center: <http://lgbt.Syr.Edu/>

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# Wrap up and questions

## Cultural Adjustment:

- It is a Process
- It requires self-awareness
- There are definitely some *dos* and *don'ts* that you have to learn: observe, ask, act
- You are not alone: look around, there are many of you here!
- We hope what we have discussed today will assist you on this journey!