

## **HF Workshop: The Adaptation Process, Culture Shock and What Do We Do About it**

Everyone experiences adapting to a new culture a little differently, but generally, it looks like a roller coaster ride: there are lots of ups, downs and curves in the road.

Not everyone goes thru all the stages, but let's take a look at what an AP might experience:

### **The "Honeymoon"**

For most APs, it's been a dream to come to the U.S. They often have high expectations for their AP year, maybe too high! On arrival, everything may seem perfect and so exciting, until one day...

### **Culture Shock!**

The AP may wake up and feel just dreadful. She may:

- Have no energy
- Feel sick
- Cry for no reason
- Feel so homesick that she feels her heart will break
- Feel angry: angry at the "stupid Americans" and at herself for making this decision.
- Not recognize herself. She doesn't know what's going on but it feels awful and she may want to go home!

Culture shock is like a psychological disorientation. It is often called "culture fatigue." The AP is "tired of eating strange food, tired of speaking and listening to a strange language, and tired of watching a lot of strange behavior."

On day her body might just shut down. This stage feels awful and is difficult for the HF to understand, but it will pass if everyone deals with the stress.

When you have a newly-arrived, non-functioning AP, call your counselor immediately! He/she will guide you and the AP through this difficult stage. The counselor will likely do the following and encourage you to do the same:

- **Assess the situation:** When there are indications that the AP is experiencing extreme homesickness and/or culture shock, the CC will meet with the AP



- She'll understand the HF's routine and expectations
- She'll learn her way around
- And she'll feel more comfortable communicating with the CC and her HF!