



## Important Information about Cultural Differences

**Cultural Information** - It is important to be sensitive to the cultural differences that exist between our US culture and those of the visiting students.

### **Culture Shock and Adjustment Issues**

Living and working in a new culture and environment requires a tremendous amount of energy and patience. The adjustment process or “culture shock” that students experience may be difficult at times as they are confronted with unfamiliar surroundings: communication, food, climate, people and lifestyle. Confusion, frustration and stress often accompany the process of adjustment that students may encounter at the beginning. Most students experience culture shock in varying degrees and go through various stages of adjustment that include the following:

1. Euphoria: At the beginning, the host culture is new and exciting.
2. Anxiety: The excitement fades when a routine is established in the new environment. Feelings or physical symptoms of helplessness, withdrawal, irritability, and insomnia may result.
3. Rejection of the new culture: Everything in the new culture is wrong and the home culture is secure; homesickness develops.
4. Acceptance: Recognizing and respecting some of the perceived shortcoming in the host culture and feeling comfortable with it.

To help minimize the effect of culture shock, emphasize:

1. Open communication: Talking about challenges and feelings will help reduce the stress. Regular meetings will keep the verbal communication open.
2. Open mind: Having a positive attitude goes a long way toward adjustment. Sometimes students need reminded of this.
3. Staying active: Getting involved with the American culture outside of work is important. Encourage the students to do this.
4. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle: Eating a balanced diet, exercising and getting sufficient rest will help students feel much better.