



AFS
Intercultural
Programs USA

Common Problems and Solutions Worksheet

Common Problems	Notes	Possible Solutions
<p>You may feel confused, especially in the first few weeks after your return, because the values, attitudes, and lifestyles you learned in your host family conflict with predominant patterns at home.</p>		<p>Deep differences in cultural patterns require time to explore and understand. Take time to evaluate both cultural perspectives before deciding on your preference and integrating it into your lifestyle.</p>
<p>Sometimes friends and family at home do not seem interested in hearing about aspects of your AFS experience that you find meaningful and important.</p>		<p>You should realize that they may be adjusting to the changes that have taken place in you. Furthermore, they may never have had an experience comparable with yours and so may have difficulty sharing your enthusiasm. Be patient and seek other Returnees who can help put your experience in perspective.</p>
<p>Friends and family may treat you as the same person you were before you left without recognizing the changes you have been through. But as a result of these changes, you might feel a need for new or modified personal relationships that acknowledge the changed or expanded dimensions of your personality.</p>		<p>Remember that your friends and family may be feeling uncertain about how you have changed or grown. Discuss your feelings about yourself and others with them, trying to encourage positive changes in old relationships. Also seek out new friendships with people who are compatible with the "changing you."</p>
<p>You may feel uncomfortable talking about your feelings or affection for your host family because your own family feels left out or possibly jealous. Friends might also seem to be envious or jealous of the experience you have had.</p>		<p>Be sensitive to the feelings of others who have not had the opportunity you have had. If necessary, try to tone down your discussions; perhaps you are encouraging these feelings in others by dwelling too much on your own experiences. Try to listen to what has happened to them while you were gone, too.</p>

Common Problems	Notes	Possible Solutions
<p>You might be anxious or apprehensive about your academic situation because the subjects you enjoyed studying abroad have little relevance to your education at home. You might also be confused about future educational and career plans in light of new or uncertain goals and priorities.</p>		<p>Take advantage of the wide range of educational opportunities and alternatives available to you by finding informal and nonacademic ways to continue the study of your favorite subjects. Take time to consider educational and career plans that include your areas of interest. Seek out the advice of your counselors or mentors.</p>
<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 also feel isolated or rejected. Furthermore, you may feel highly critical of your home country because you have new perspectives on it; you may be criticized by others for your “negative attitude.”</p>		<p>Try to keep perspective on your feelings: remember that your opinions and ideas may initially be greatly influenced by the perspectives of your host culture and may not present your final balanced viewpoint. Share your feelings with others, but be cautious in choosing situations in which to bring up controversial issues.</p>
<p>You may become frustrated because people at home are uninformed about, or uninterested in, other peoples and cultures, including those of your host community. Faced with this lack of concern, you might feel that there is no way for you to take an active role in helping solve the problems of others in the world community.</p>		<p>Attempt to generate local interest 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.</p>

* *The AFS Study Guide*. (1979). Washington D.C.: AFS International/Intercultural Programs.