

Topic: Cultural Adjustment
(Church World Service/Overseas Processing Entities in Accra, Ghana and Nairobi,
Kenya)

Activity: Exploring Cultural Differences

Introduction

In this activity, refugees will explore differences between their country's culture and the culture of the United States.

Objective

Participants will become aware of and sensitive to the differences between their country's culture and the culture of the United States.

Materials

- Situation cards (see examples below)

Practice

1. Divide participants into five small groups.
2. Pass out one situation cards to each group.
3. Request that participants read the situation card given to their group. They should then discuss the situation and answer the questions on the card. Inform participants that they should be prepared to report back to the larger group with their answers.

This document was developed with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States Department of State, but does not necessarily represent the policy of that agency and the reader should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Situation 1

You have been in the U.S. for two months. You go to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes three days a week and study hard. Your teacher is very encouraging and always talks with you and the other students. One afternoon she stays after class to help you prepare for a job interview. After practicing for the interview, you tell the teacher that you love her and want to marry her. The teacher rejects you.

1. What would you do?
2. How would you feel?
3. Why did the teacher react this way?
4. What do you think you should have done differently?
5. List the differences between your culture and the U.S. culture regarding dating and relationships

Situation 2

You are a 17-year-old high school student and living with your parents. You are working a weekend job. Your parents rely on you to help take care of your younger brothers and sisters. Your father has asked you to cook dinner once a week for the family.

1. How do you feel?
2. What would you do?
3. Would this happen in your home country?
4. List how your responsibilities might change once you have arrived in the U.S.

Situation 3

You are sixteen years old and going to high school. Some students make fun of your traditional clothing and say you smell bad. One boy in your class invites you to join his group of friends. These boys are known to fight, skip school and talk back to the teachers, but finally you have been accepted to join a group.

1. What would you do?
2. How would you feel?
3. What do you think could happen if you joined this group?
4. Do you need to forget about where you come from in order to fit in at school?
5. What aspects of your home culture would you leave behind and which ones would you teach to your new friends in the United States?

This document was developed with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States Department of State, but does not necessarily represent the policy of that agency and the reader should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Situation 4

You have been working as a cashier for two months. You have become friends with another woman at work and you eat lunch together. On a free day, you go to her house for a visit. She is surprised to see you and does not invite you in. She explains that she is busy. She says she is sorry and she will see you at work the next day.

1. What would you do?
2. How would you feel?
3. Why did your friend react this way?
4. List the differences between your culture and U.S. culture regarding socialization and friendship.

Situation 5

You and your friend are taking the bus into the city. You get onto the bus and see that there are no empty "two person" seats for you and your friend. There is plenty of room if you squeeze in together on a seat with a smaller woman. You and your friend sit down and the woman becomes angry.

1. What would you do?
2. How would you feel?
3. Why do you think this woman is upset?
4. Would this happen in your home country?
5. List the differences between your culture and U.S. culture regarding personal space and touching.

This document was developed with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States Department of State, but does not necessarily represent the policy of that agency and the reader should not assume endorsement by the federal government.