

Other people can help you feel better, if you tell them how you feel. Talk to your caseworker, doctor, or a mental health professional. In an emergency, if you are afraid you might hurt yourself or someone else, please call 911.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.cal.org/CO/welcome/A14CULT.HTM>

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Adjusting to a New Culture



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*Protecting Refugees, Serving Immigrants,
Upholding Freedom since 1911*

Coming to the United States is an exciting time and offers many opportunities. You will learn to live and work in a different culture. This brochure explains what you and your family can expect as you adjust to life in the U.S.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is the beliefs and values that a group of people share. These beliefs and values influence what people say and do. Some ideas you think are right or normal may be strange to Americans. Some actions Americans do may appear odd to you. Learning about a different culture is part of learning to live in your new country. You do not have to change your beliefs and values and follow the American culture, but you have to learn to live and work within it.

WHAT IS CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT?

Cultural adjustment is learning to live and work in a different culture. It means making many changes and learning new things, such as:

- meeting new people,
- learning a new language,
- learning to live without familiar people and places, and
- having new responsibilities in the family.

WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT?

Each person experiences the adjustment differently.

Stage 1 – For several weeks after arriving, everything seems new and interesting. You believe most of your problems are behind you. You feel hopeful.

Stage 2 – After several weeks, you realize that the U.S. is not perfect. You notice Americans act differently. Their ways seem strange, even rude or silly. You miss your home country and familiar people. What you must do and learn seems difficult and hopeless. You feel sad and angry.

Stage 3 – Your sad and angry feelings will pass with time. It is a slow process that may take months or years. Slowly, your new home and the American culture do not seem as strange. You find new habits and friends. You do not miss your home country as much. You see the good and the bad of both countries and you try to take the best from each.

WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL BETTER?

These feelings happen to anyone who has to make many difficult changes. Understanding that this process happens is helpful.

Share your experiences with friends and family and get their support. Find solutions together.

Look for the good around you. See challenges as a way to learn and grow.

Get enough sleep. Eat healthy foods. Exercise regularly. Plan activities that you enjoy and help you feel at peace. These habits will keep

your body and mind healthy.

Accept that people think and act differently. An action or word that seems insulting may not be intended that way.

Allow yourself to feel overwhelmed from time to time. Give yourself time to learn and adapt.

Look for new friends, or make American friends. Offer to share some of your traditions. You will enjoy learning from each other.

Learn about your new country, its history and traditions. Ask questions of American friends or immigrants who have been here a longer time.

Do not be afraid to make mistakes. Learn from them. No one expects perfection. Most will appreciate your courage and effort.

WHEN DO I NEED ADDITIONAL HELP?

You may need additional help if:

- You feel sad, angry, or scared more often than you feel happy
- Your feelings of sadness or anger are much worse than described
- Your bad memories bother you, interrupting your thoughts and dreams
- You feel like your problems are unbearable
- You worry all of the time
- You feel like people are planning to hurt you