

Six to eight months into a posting seems to be a critical period. The mundane details have been settled, the early superficial excitement of welcoming activities has passed, your initial curiosity about the country has been satisfied; you are expected to be a competent old hand rather than new and in need of sheltering. There is time for thinking and self-assessment. Don't give up now: you are beginning to adapt.

Three quarters of the way through your first year you should find yourself accepting the host country's foreignness as just another way of living.

Experience helps, but not always. A positive attitude toward the posting by those involved in the move predisposes them to successful adaptation. Creating this positive attitude among family members is a difficult, but important part of preparation for the move.

Some form of culture shock is inevitable, so it is best treated as a positive learning experience.

Spouses who arrive at post at different times may find themselves out of step in the adaptation process. This can create additional stress. Also, people move through the adaptation process at their own individual speed. It is not unusual for the employee and the spouse to have very different experiences during this period which can also affect the process. Expect everyone to be a little tense until they have successfully completed this rite of passage.

Activities to assist cultural adaptation:

- acquire as much up-to-date information before leaving as possible; there will be much to learn after you arrive so learn as much as you can before you leave home
- begin learning the major local language
- talk to a number of people who have been there, try to find someone who has been there recently and in the same family situation
- participate in the pre-posting activities offered by the Department
- read about cultural adaptation and crosscultural communication
- acknowledge the anxieties of family members and help them prepare emotionally for the move
- acknowledge your own anxieties and take time to deal with them
- after you arrive continue with your studies of the host country and the language; the more you know, the more you will understand