

base for working in many areas of the world and communicating effectively. But if you are planning to work in a country that is neither Anglophone nor Francophone, you will have communication problems. If you intend to learn the language of your host country, you might consider beginning your studies before your departure by obtaining audiotapes or registering in a language course.

Culture Shock

Many people who work overseas experience what is commonly referred to as culture shock. Although its intensity varies from one individual to another, most people experience a period of cultural adjustment.

During the first stage, often described as the honeymoon, all encounters in the new place are perceived as exciting and positive. In the second stage, sometimes called the "emptiness phase," foreigners feel a sense of dislocation and a general unease.

Symptoms include:

- feelings of anger, frustration or irritability, and loss of their sense of humour;
- withdrawal, spending excessive amounts of time alone, or spending time only with Canadians or other foreigners and avoiding contact with locals;
- negative feelings about the people and culture of the host country;
- compulsive eating and drinking, or a need for excessive amounts of sleep;
- boredom, tiredness and an inability to concentrate or work effectively.

During the third and final stage, foreigners start to accept their new surroundings and make a compromise between the honeymoon and the emptiness phases. To better deal with culture shock, learn to recognize the symptoms. You will then be able to react quickly and efficiently to overcome its effects.

You should also be aware that you might experience a reverse form of culture shock after living abroad. Be prepared to face a period of readjustment when you return to Canada. For more information about the symptoms of culture shock and coping strategies, see the Coping with Culture Shock page and the recommendations for further reading in the For More Information section.