

Learning Unit 1 / Activity 1.5: **Annex 1****Adapting to change**

Things change constantly. Loved ones die; jobs end, as do [relationships](#). People get promoted, couples bond in [marriage](#), and babies are born. Guess what? The positive changes can be as hard to adapt to as the negative ones. Here are some tips on adjusting to change, both good and bad, to help make life easier.

When a good change appears, accept it with grace. You may not believe you deserve it, or you just may not be ready for it, but the only way to move forward and get the most out of it is to embrace the positivity, however it shows up.

When a negative change is looming, start looking for alternatives before it actually happens, if you can. For example, if you know your company is in trouble and you are hearing things that are making you insecure, don't wait to get laid off, but start looking for another job. Even if your current position isn't changed, you will have gained valuable experience and maybe a better gig.

Change is constant, so we usually don't notice the little or the expected changes; it's when you are caught off-guard that you can get discombobulated. The trick is to know that it is just one of the millions of changes that are going to happen in your life and, good or not so good, do what you can to just roll with it.

Emotional changes can be the hardest to adjust to. For example, when your heart gets broken, acceptance is not always an easy option. You may not have the strength or [understanding](#) to be objective. In cases like this, you need to process your feelings, and this can take some time. If you want it to go faster, see a therapist.

When you start to develop feelings for another human being, it is as though everything changes. Generally, people who are falling in love see life differently, and it's real easy to get caught up in the feelings and ignore whatever else is going on. Take care of the day-to-day, and enjoy your sweetheart.

Take responsibility for how you deal with changes. One of my mentors, Dr. Albert Ellis, once said, "The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on your mother, the ecology, or the president. You realize that you control your own destiny."

If the changes in your life are overwhelming, you don't have to deal with them all by yourself. [Friends](#), family, support groups, and counselors are available, but you do have to reach out and ask, which can be hard. It may be a struggle, but you don't have to suffer. The love of those who care for you can make life much easier to deal with.

If you are someone who hates change, then you are going to have to at least tolerate it when it happens. There is no law saying that you have to like what's going on, but you do have to find a way to cope, because change happens, like it or not.

Life can be difficult to navigate in our fast-moving society. Things are changing so quickly these days that by the time you've opened the box of your new cell phone, it's probably out of date. Learning (at your own pace) to deal with the changes going on around you is a great survival tool. We used to say "Go with the flow," and that may be the most comfortable way to deal with the future.

Adapting to a new culture

Adapting to a new culture can be difficult, especially when [moving abroad](#). Most people who live in a foreign country for some time go through an adjustment period during which "Culture Shock" is experienced. Once culture shock is understood, its effects can be minimised dramatically.

Expatriates usually experience the following phases while adjusting to their new country:

- [Honeymoon phase](#)
- [Negotiation phase](#)
- [Adjustment phase](#)
- [Reverse culture shock](#)
- [Countering Culture Shock](#)

Stages of Culture Shock

Honeymoon phase:

During the "Honeymoon Phase", newly arrived expatriates are excited about their new surroundings and are eager to explore the new country. They are very positive about their relocation and the newness of the country.

Negotiation phase:

Description:

After a few weeks in a foreign country, expatriates usually experience homesickness. Simple day-to-day tasks, such as taking transportation, shopping or attending school meetings, can become a real challenge in a different environment. This is sometimes exacerbated by language barriers. These are

challenges that locals may not be able to understand, and they may be seen by expatriates as being insensitive or unsympathetic people.

Stereotype:

Stereotypes are mostly created during the negotiation phase of an expatriation. Stereotyping may help the ego of someone suffering from severe culture shock, but it will not lead to adaptation to the new country.

Attitude – a factor to success:

Attitude is a very important factor to success or failure. Frustration leads to aggressiveness and roughness towards others. Locals, in turn, behave the same way or ignore the expatriate, further increasing the stereotypes and frustration. Expatriates who overcome this step are usually successful in their expatriation, those who don't, just leave the host country earlier than expected.

Three types of reaction

There are three main types of reactions:

- **Rejecters:** Some expatriates find adapting to a new country and its culture to be particularly difficult. They tend to isolate themselves from the host country that they perceive as hostile, and believe that returning home is the only way for them to be in harmony with their environment again.
- **Adopters:** Some expatriates embrace their host culture and country, whilst losing their original identity. They usually choose to stay in the host country forever.
- **Cosmopolitans:** They see their host country and culture positively, and manage to adapt whilst keeping their original identity. They create their own blend and usually have no problem returning to their home country or relocating elsewhere.

Adjustment phase:

Six to 12 months after arriving in the host country, expatriates usually begin to grow accustomed to their new home and know what to expect from their surroundings. Daily activities become routine and the customs of the host country are accepted as another way of living.

At this stage expatriates are able to communicate more freely with locals. The previously hostile country has now become a place from which expatriates can learn and enrich their lives. Once expatriates have reached this stage, the longer they remain in the host country, the more unique their experience will be.

Reverse culture shock:

Reverse Culture Shock occurs when expatriates return to their home country after a long period away. As expatriates had to previously adjust to a new environment, returning home presents a similar challenge. Being prepared for the return home goes a long way towards helping former

expatriates reintegrate into their home country.

Countering Culture shock:

Certain steps can be taken to help avoid the worst aspects of Culture Shock. A little research will help you understand what to expect in the new country and assist you in settling down.

- [Learn the language](#)
- [Prepare for cultural differences](#)
- [Be open-minded](#)
- [Be patient](#)
- [Take time off](#)

Learn the language:

Learning the national language(s) spoken in your adopted country will help you communicate, and reduce the effects of culture shock and misunderstanding. Being able to communicate with the locals will minimise the stress of your move.

Prepare for cultural differences:

The more you know about the culture of your host country, the more prepared you will be for a different way of life, and the easier it will be for you to cope with new ideas and experiences. Misunderstandings due to cultural differences are a reality but can be reduced through sensitivity and careful communication.

Be open-minded:

Be open to accepting cultural differences and alternative ways of doing things. The unfamiliar may be frightening at first but in time you will find yourself taking these once-unfamiliar situations for granted.

Be patient:

Adapting to a new culture and country takes time. Be patient with yourself and allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them as you go along.

Take time off:

It's natural to long for things to be the way they were in your own country. Taking a break from all that is unfamiliar helps. When adapting seems difficult, take part in a familiar activity (read a book, watch a movie or listen to music in your home language). You will find that this will energise you and help you tackle any challenges that you are facing.

Following our suggestions should help you acclimatise to your new host country and discover a whole new world of cultural meanings and knowledge. Expatriation is a challenging experience that can ultimately be rewarding, both personally and professionally.