While studying or working abroad is extremely rewarding in many ways it can also be very stressful—tudents experience all sorts of new situations and emotions and may not know how to deal with all of them especially when they're isolated from friends and family—his checklist will cover some of the emotions you can expect to encounter while abroad—and will give you a chance to check in with your own feelings and thoughts—emember that everybody experiences change differently—and study abroad programs are all different so you may not relate to all of the experiences here—heck in with yourself and remember that there is no wrong response to life abroad—even if it means coming home early

## efore your departure

Excitement – tudy and work abroad programs are incredible opportunities and you will likely be very excited in the months leading up to your departure. You may want to channel this excitement into making specific plans for your time abroad and sharing your excitement with your friends

Procrastination – When you are preparing to go abroad the future might seem distant or unreal uddenly you realize that you are leaving in a matter of days and haven't even begun to prepare rocrastinating on packing is common but if you are worried that you will forget to plan important details ahead of time check out our other hecklist ractical reparation for tudy and Work broad or make your own to feel more confident—ach country you might go to will have its own list of matters that you simply must organize well in advance of your trip whether that is a student visa documentation of health tests or some other requirement there are some tasks that must be tackled early in the planning stage e sure you identify those tasks at the start of your planning

study abroad program can bring about a return or increase in symptoms f you are currently involved with mental health services discuss the advisability of participating in a study abroad program with your mental health practitioner ake a plan as to how to stay well mentally what coping strategies you can use and what kind of support you will need and how to get it onsider things like writing in a journal keeping in close contact with someone at home

Do some research before you go. Be sure you know what mental health resources, if any, are available in the country you are going to

surprise or shock you at first hink about your own culturally ingrained beliefs and how they are reflective of values that may not be shared the world around re you angry at something that is objectively unjust or are you imposing your own cultural norms on your hosts on't be afraid to assert your personal needs but also don't expect your host family or organization to "come around" to your way of thinking very cultural dialogue is a two way discussion Homesickness – t any point in time during your program you may start to miss home omesickness tends to occur in cycles and is often triggered by a particularly stressful situation or a moment that reminds you of the people and things you have left behind t may feel deeply painful and you may start counting down the days until you return home or wondering why you decided to come sk yourself if what you are experiencing is an ongoing problem and if so if there is something you can do to fix it or if you are simply missing the familiar comforts and friends of home eep in contact with people from home or even go looking for gifts to bring your friends and family mmerse yourself in your ost importantly know that homesickness is worst when you are bored and try to find new ways to entertain yourself he feeling of homesickness will

Exhaustion/Restlessness — verything is new when you are away from home and it can be difficult to feel relaxed — his is especially true if you are immersed in a language you don't speak fluently—or if you are living in a homestay situation or with people you don't know—You may be exhausted—but worry that by taking a day to rest—you aren't making the most of your limited experience—nly you can truly know what is best for you—but remember that a normal amount of activity for you may be different here than at home—v—rythin—will require more energy but you may get a higher energy payout too—especially if you are extraverted—ry to tailor your activities to your energy needs

Anxiety – While anxiety is most commonly a problem in anticipation of going abroad there are many reasons students experience anxiety while abroad especially near the beginning of their travels. You may worry that you will not fit in find friends or learn enough about the language or culture. You may feel under qualified for the types of courses or work you are participating in and may worry that you will fail or will suffer academically back home it may seem that all of the other international students are adjusting better or more quickly than you emember that adjustment to a new culture is an individual process and there is no right way to do it likely all of your peers are experiencing the same things as you but at different times and in different ways—specially if you have peers who are also international students consider talking with them about your experiences. You may find that you have more in common than you realize and that your anxieties begin to disappear as you voice your concerns.

Frustration—specially if you have chosen an international program expecting to learn a new drill, such as a language or trade, you may feel frustrated at any program and the program and

to learn a new skill such as a language or trade you may feel frustrated at an apparent lack of progress. You may quickly learn where and how to order food and buy groceries for example but then run into trouble at a train station and feel that you are backsliding or have stopped progressing emember that every new situation brings new challenges and expectations and that it is impossible to

adjust to an entirely new culture overnight—ake stock of your accomplishments—they are probably greater in number than you think

Cultural adjustment — t a certain point in your travels you are likely to begin to feel as though you fit in You will be speaking the language better meeting new people and navigating everyday life more easily—his can come in waves but often indicates that you are coming to accept the different way of life in your host country—and understanding the reasons behind certain cultural differences You will not necessarily "pass for a native"—and need not attempt to—but will likely start to navigate a line somewhere between your native culture and your host culture—his is reflective of a two way cultural dialogue

Relapse — fter believing that you have overcome the frustrations associated with culture shock and beginning to navigate daily life more easily you may find that you "relapse" from time to time t may take learning more about your host country to realize that you really don't know very much at all ultural integration is a long process and most students come to the conclusion that they are not as culturally competent as they initially thought his is a sign of self awareness and reflection and does not mean that you are culturally incompetent t is possible to get back to a place of feeling physically and emotionally secure without thinking that you know everything about a country or culture

While all of the above described feelings are normal and common among students living abroad they are distinguishable by the fact that they are usually temporary and relatively mild even if they don't always feel that way. While it is important to remain open to new cultural experiences not all of which will be positive there is a difference between cultural experience and mental distress. If these feelings persist or are overwhelming or you are feeling unsafe there are resources available online at home and in your host country to help you deal with such challenges see the bottom of this list for some example resources.

t is also possible that some students may experience psychological responses to traumatic experiences such as physical assault sexual assault a serious accident or witnessing a traumatic event of things cannot be safely managed from where you are it may be necessary for you to relocate or return home

## e entry oing home

Reverse culture shock – When you arrive back home you may find that you experience some of the feelings associated with culture shock "everse culture shock" can be even more dramatic than culture shock as you expect to feel at home in your own community. You may feel that others have changed or that you have progressed while your friends and family have remained stagnant. You may begin to draw comparisons with your host country, and criticize aspects of your home culture—tits worst reverse culture shock can lead students to lash out at friends and family for things that they have always done.

**Relief** – While stressful going home can also be a great relief — fter spending so much time and energy trying to navigate new situations daily it can be freeing to go back to a simpler everyday routine

Inundation — ontrary to relief some students find that returning home results in a more hectic schedule. You may have had more social interactions and less professional and academic work while abroad depending on the nature of your international program—specially for students dealing with significant stress at work and home this shift back to life at home can be overwhelming—oupled with the feeling of having to "catch up" from what you have missed while away you may feel like the workload is unmanageable—his feeling will subside however as you reacclimate to your home country

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