**Re-Entry Shock**

Re-Entry shock is a term associated with the phenomenon of returning to one's own country and culture. Very similar to culture shock, a person entering into their home environment will have to make adjustments to reacquaint themselves with their surroundings. Unlike culture shock, most don't anticipate feeling like a foreigner in their own home. However, it should be expected. If you have made any cultural adjustments while abroad, you will have to readjust once back home.

The re-entry process is often distinguished by 3 main parts: Euphoria, Shock & Adjustment.

**Euphoria:** Most travelers will experience some form of euphoria or high when returning home. For weeks the traveler has anticipated returning home and has now come face to face with family, friends, pizza and hot showers. To friends and family you are nothing short of a celebrity. People want to hear about your trip and look at your photos. But this eagerness can last for a surprisingly short period of time. As can your tolerance to being asked “how was your trip?” or “what was your favorite part?” During the initial stage of euphoria, it is usually a good idea to get as much of the things needed to be done out of the way. Take advantage of the high energy!

**Shock:** All those social cues that you once took for granted now have to be relearned. You feel frustrated that loved ones have so quickly put your travels into the past, or don’t truly understand what your experienced. This shock can tend to feel similar to the effects of culture shock: anxiety, irritability, nervousness, unable to sleep, or tendency to oversleep. There really is no one pattern or set list of symptoms for re-entry shock. And unlike culture shock, there is no timetable for moving past it.

**Adjustment:** Given time, the majority of travelers will come to some final state of adjustment. They will take the teachings that their experience provided them and put them into the context of their home. Homesickness for the home that you left behind gives way to a renewal of bonds with old and new friends and family. Your life begins to resemble a little of the life you left, except with a broader perspective from your journey.

**You know you are having reverse culture shock when you are ...**

**Feeling like a foreigner.** Many travelers commonly describe the feeling of not belonging or fitting in with their home county. Many of the social cues that you once instinctively knew have to be relearned. Whether it is a question of what direction traffic flows, knowing how to make a decision amongst so many choices, or understanding the etiquette between close friends-- all things which you once took for granted has to be relearned.

**Feeling like you've changed, while every one else has stayed the same.** For many, the experience abroad is a life altering experience. The ways that you see the world, life and others will forever be different. It is hard not be judgmental with others' views, as their day-to-day life appears to have remained the same. You are no longer interested in the things that they want to talk about and find yourself distancing from them. It is even harder when it appears that everyone seems to expect you to go back to the same routine as before and pretend that you never left at all.
**Becoming critical**: Traveling abroad can very often open you to new ideas, new ways of doing things. A good number of these ideas and ideologies can be in conflict with how things are done at home. Material excesses, the facelessness of doing business and the endless regulations of day-to-day life can cause the international traveler significant distress. You take responsibility for society's ills, deciding your lifestyle before going abroad was complicit in its conformity.

**Homesick for another home**: Experiencing some type of homesickness for the host country is common. Missing people, the food and the way of life abroad are all a natural part of re-entry. Being a foreigner abroad, in some parts of the world, can give you instantaneous merit and celebrity status. Being in another country can also give way to feelings of exalted personal freedoms and addictive adrenaline from the adventure. As such, one can easily romanticize your host country once back home.

**Feeling Useless**: All these feelings of alienation, criticism, inability to absorb uncomplicated social cues and homesickness can lead one to feeling quite useless and incompetent. As a result some travelers further alienate themselves having neither the confidence nor the energy to do day-to-day tasks of school work, emails, etc. The additional stress of not having these issues solved compounds the problem.

### Ways of Dealing with Re-Entry Shock

**Expect it.** Recognizing that you are displaying certain signs of re-entry shock will go a long way in passing through it. Just remember that your negative or uncomfortable reactions may be a response to the adjustment that you are going through.

**Be reflective.** Take some time to consider and plan your return. Predict what challenges lie ahead and consider strategies for dealing with them. Keep in mind the benefits and try to stay positive. Attend to the things that need doing early on in your return while your energy is high.

**Listen to the needs of others.** Friends may find it frustrating to hear, once again, another story about your trip abroad. Ask them about their own time spent while you were abroad. Be patient. It may take some time for people to catch up on the changes that occurred with you. Make sure that they are aware of the fact that you need time to adjust.

**Enjoy it.** Re-entry shock, while should be taken seriously, should also be enjoyed. The fact that you are experiencing it is indicative of the deepness of your exploration into your host culture. Accept re-entry as one more part of the journey.

**Keep writing in your journal.** Given that re-entry is part of the journey, it is important to keep documenting it in your journal. It may help you map out some of your difficulties and keep things in perspective.

**Publish your experiences**, Write an article for your school or local town paper. Research other travel magazines or blogs.
Treat yourself to some of the experiences that you enjoyed in your host community. Find ways to treating yourself to some of the things that you most enjoyed about being abroad. Write to a friend that you met traveling. Go out for dinner in a restaurant that specializes in your host country's cuisine. Try the language as well as the food. Rent a foreign film.

Find like-minded people. You are not the only one who has every gone away! Find people who have shared in similar experiences.

Stay involved: Keep current with international news. Stay in touch with your host community.

Use your experience: Going overseas is an accomplishment and something that you should feel proud for doing. For many people it guides major academic, professional and recreational directions. If your experience inspires any and all of these things … wonderful!

Volunteer at home: There are plenty of local, national and international organizations that you can put your newfound energy into.

Isn't it great that the journey doesn't come to an end the moment you return home?!