Reentry Shock or Reverse Culture Shock
(Adapted from Robert Kohls, Survival Kit for Overseas Living)

What is it?
Does it feel as though your friends and family don’t understand the importance of your experiences abroad?
Do they ask questions about your experiences but lose interest after a few minutes?
Does your everyday life here seem to be dull?
Are you experiencing any of the following?
- Depression or Uncertainty
- Confusion or Restlessness
- Wanting to be alone
- Changing goals and priorities
- Negativity towards the US
- Reverse Homesickness

If these questions identify feelings you’ve been having recently, you may be experiencing “reverse culture shock.” Every individual deals with these feelings in a different way. Some want to be left alone by everyone and allow interaction only with those who were abroad with them, while others will want to tell everyone they can about their experiences. Some returnees will have difficulty finding anything positive to say about the US while others will not feel out of place at all.

The real key to re-entering your home culture is to realize that there may be frustrations with readjusting to life in the US, and these frustrations are a normal part of the total learning process.

Re-entry shock is at least as frequent as culture shock but the least recognized or expected.

Do you remember the stages of adjustment for entering your new environment? Well, there’s a whole new set of stages coming home (although you will see an overlap with many of the initial stages).

1. **Disengagement:** While you are still abroad, you begin to start thinking about moving back to the US and moving away from your overseas experience and friends.

2. **Initial Euphoria:** You may be very pleased, even euphoric, to be back in your own country, and others may be equally delighted to have you back. But after people express their pleasures at seeing you again and listen politely to your stories for a few minutes, you may suddenly and/or painfully realize that they are not particularly interested in what happened to you abroad and would much prefer to talk about their own affairs.
3. **Alienation:** You experience dampened euphoria with feelings of alienation, frustration and anger. You may even feel like an outsider or foreigner in your own country. America will be different from how you remembered it. the pace may be more hectic or hurried, there might appear to be more violence than you remembered etc.

4. **Gradual Readjustment:** You no longer are shocked by the large variety you find on the supermarket shelves and you can now contain your comments about the differences between cultures that come to your attention. You'll find that your “English only” conversational skills improve during this stage; you stop adding foreign words into your general conversation.

**WAYS TO MAKE YOUR TRANSITION SMOOTHER**

- You may or may not encounter all or none of the stages listed below but understand that it is normal if you are. The more you have immersed yourself in the host culture, the more difficult you may find re-entry. THIS IS NORMAL!! Find someone here who can update you on what has been going on at the university, in the US etc for the past year.

- If you find that your beliefs and values have changed, learn to incorporate the new with the old.

- Understand that your “old” friendships and relationships might change as a function of your new experiences; seek out people with whom you can share your international experiences so you don’t feel as if you have completely abandoned your new experiences.

- Understand that you will need time to adjust to the pace and pressures of university life back here. Learn to gradually increase the pace of your academic studies and extracurricular activities. You may notice that the “old ways” of managing your time are no longer appropriate.

- SEEK counsel if you need it, there is nothing wrong with doing this. It may even been wise to connect with a “veteran” from a previous years exchange for support.