A circular inset image showing a city skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the buildings. The skyline includes several tall skyscrapers, with one prominently displaying an 'Allianz' logo. The foreground shows a dense urban area with lower-rise buildings and a street with some trees.

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDYING ABROAD

Deborah Swallow DBA MSc
Barry Tomalin MA

AGENDA

- Studying Overseas
- Understanding Culture Shock
- Coming Home



STUDYING OVERSEAS



WHY STUDENTS DON'T FIT IN: -

- Working or studying abroad is an adventure.
- For many it is a defining positive experience in their lives.
- But many also experience difficulties and intense loneliness which affects the quality of their lives and can affect their studies.

SEVEN PROBLEMS AND ONE WAY TO HELP

1. Distance
2. Living with family
3. I don't mix easily
4. I don't understand my teacher
5. My nationality only
6. Burnout
7. Culture shock

1. DISTANCE

- My work is near the centre of town but my accommodation is on the outskirts.
- It takes me over an hour to get into the university/workplace and over an hour to get back.
- Because it takes so long to travel I don't attend social events in my university/workplace.

2. LIVING WITH A FAMILY

- The accommodation department placed me with a family.
- I have my room and they prepare an evening meal for me.
- But there is no social contact.
- I sit in my room every evening and on weekends and feel very lonely.

3. I DON'T MIX EASILY.

- Because of all of the above I don't/can't attend social events at college.
- I don't go to the Students' Union and I don't belong to any clubs or associations.
- I feel every excluded.

4. I DON'T UNDERSTAND MY TEACHER.

Although I speak and read the language to the required college/workplace standard I still have difficulties understanding my teacher/lecturer.

- They talk too fast.
- They speak with funny regional accents which I never learned.
- Some of them use humour which I don't understand.
- They never seem to pause to allow us to take in information.
- They use a lot of idioms and never explain them.
- They use acronyms and don't explain them.

THE USE OF ENGLISH

- **A-R-T-I-C-U-L-A-T-E**
- **PAUSE** Leave a beat when you speak.
- **JOKES** Avoid jokes.
- **IDIOMS** Avoid colloquialisms.
- **ACRONYMS** Spell out acronyms and initials.
- **KISS** (Keep it short and simple.)
 - One thought per sentence
 - 15-25 word sentences

5. MY NATIONALITY ONLY

- When I do mix with others it is always with people of my own nationality or from my region.
- We sit together in lectures and seminars.
- We revise together (and often produce the same answers!).
- We don't mix much with other nationalities or with the 'home' students.

6. BURNOUT

- I have a very heavy workload.
- I work every hour of every day seven days a week.
- When I'm not at meetings, lectures or seminars I'm at my computer.
- After a time, I can't work anymore. I'm burnt out.

7. CULTURE SHOCK!

- I feel I don't fit in.
- I feel depressed.
- I miss my family and friends at home.
- It's affecting the quality of my work.

COMPARISON 01



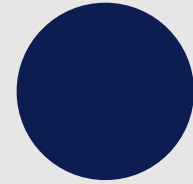
MAP



BRIDGE



INTEGRATE



What are they doing?

What am I doing?

Why are they doing it?

How am I perceived?

What can I change?

What have I learned?
ADAPT and REFLECT

MBI (Mapping, Bridging, Integrating) model put forward by Maznevski and DiStefano (2000)

HOW WE CAN HELP

- Slow down.
- Make sure the important points are clear.
- Try to get to know your class a bit so you can identify possible difficulties.
- If necessary, get the support of the student care body or even pastoral care (regardless of religious denomination).
- Keep in contact with the student representative to be aware of possible problems.
- Just by showing interest you build student engagement and involvement.



DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK



ONE DAY...

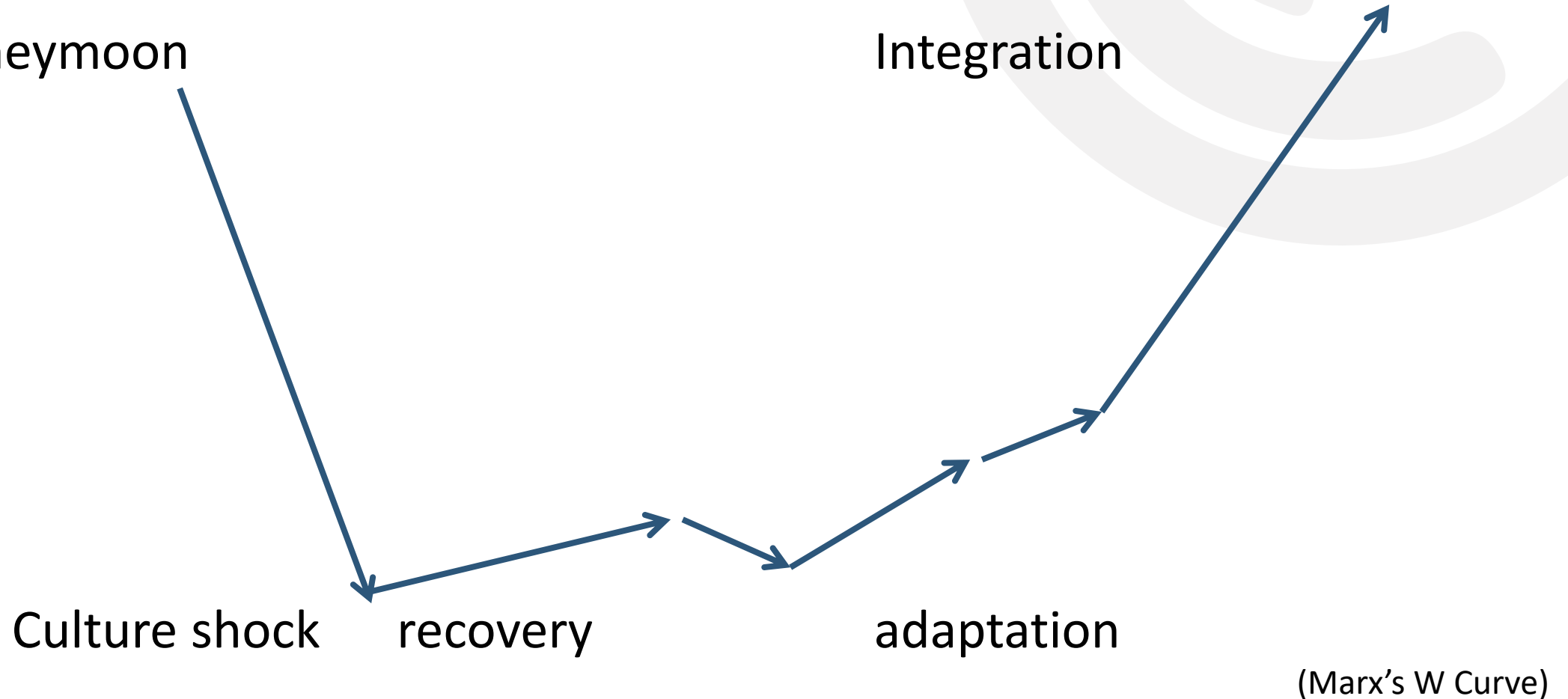


- You wake up.
- You feel depressed.
- You don't know why.
- You are missing friends and family.
- You are asking, 'Why am here?'

What is going on?

BARBARA MARX: (The W Curve – Shocks Recur)

- Honeymoon



CULTURE SHOCK

- When does it start?
 - How does it start?
 - What are the symptoms?
 - Loneliness
 - Anxiety
 - Underperformance
 - Depression
- OR
- Overwork
 - Burn out
-
- Mini shocks



THE ANSWER

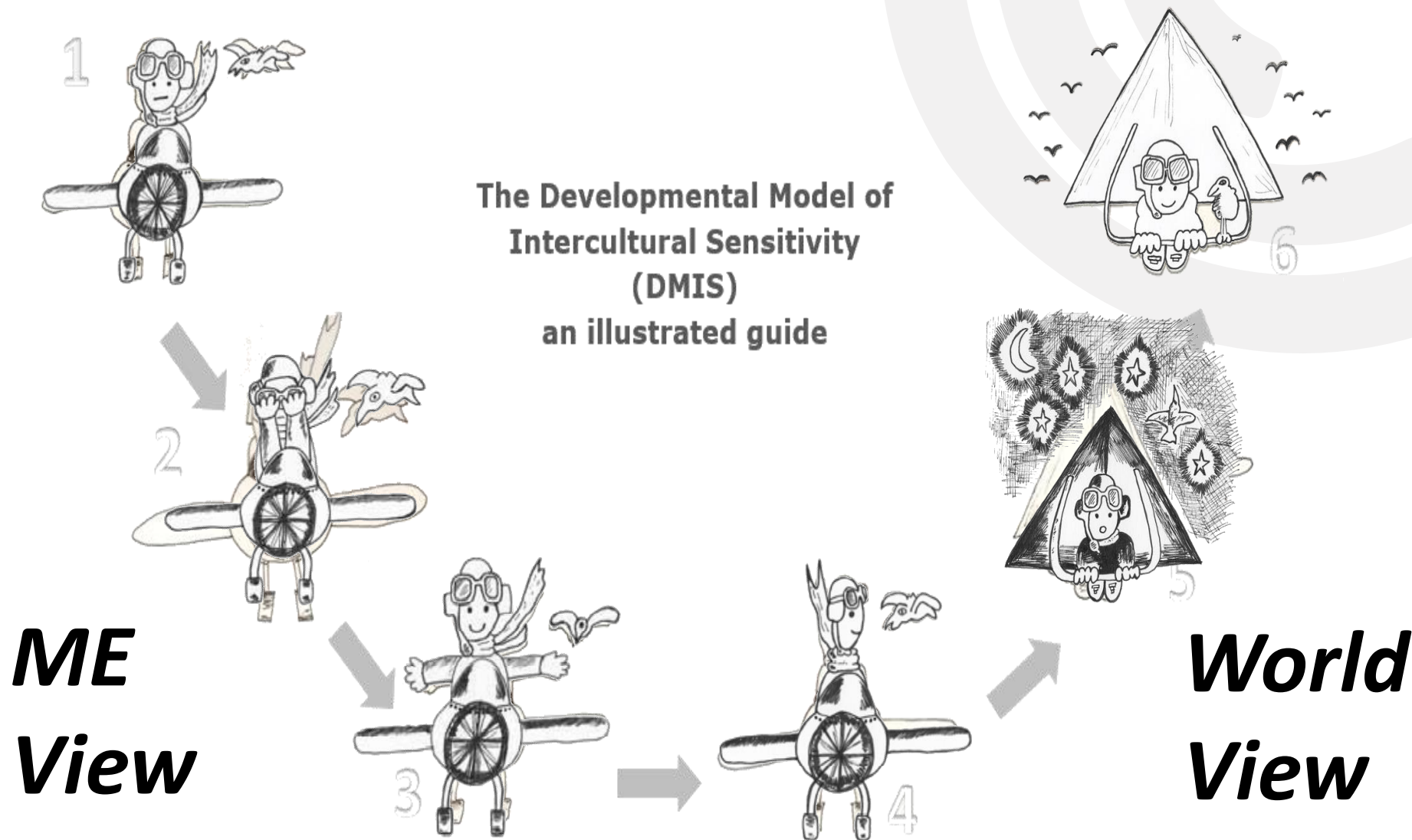


Recognise it's not you.
It's culture shock.

Treat it like the flu!
Spend a day or two in bed.

Video: Journey to Intercultural Sensitivity

<https://youtu.be/kDajBxJ9ENA>



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SO HOW DO I COPE?

- Learn about it. – You're doing that now.
 - Expect it. – It will happen in some form or other.
 - Don't get too busy too quickly.
Leave time to settle in and for family.
 - Keep in contact – with friends, family and HR at home.
- Note to family:** monitor reactions for signs of depression.
- If you need help, ask. – HR/Student advisers are trained in this.
See a doctor if you need to.

MORE COPING STRATEGIES 1

- Take comfort things – not just photos, films and music, but also a duvet, a cushion, a favourite mug.
- Find comfort places – find a place similar to where you feel comfortable at home (a park, a religious worship place, a hotel lounge with a piano bar). Use your imagination.
- Do comfort activities.
See if you can pursue the hobbies you enjoy at home, or find new ones.

MORE COPING STRATEGIES 2

- Don't let your sports or exercise routine slip. If you are used to regular exercise and decide to leave it till you've settled in, you'll feel sluggish.
- Webcam, WhatsApp, Zoom - schedule virtual coffee breaks or mealtimes
- Create a blog or leaning journey diary. Lots of students study/travel abroad and would be followers.

FINALLY, FOR CULTURE SHOCK

- Keep a sense of humour. It WILL pass.

And remember:

- ***It's worse going home!***



COMING HOME



IT'S TRUE...



Most assignees
believe that
returning home is
more traumatic than
moving abroad.

WHY?

- You've changed.
- You expect everything to be the same.
- They've changed.
- They're not interested in your extraordinary adventures.
- Food tastes different.
- Uni/School's not the same.
- You have to find new friends.
- Prices have gone up.
- Things you expect have gone.
- Things you enjoyed abroad you can't get at home

SO HOW DO I HANDLE IT?

Stage 1:
Leave-taking and departure

Stage 2:
Honeymoon stage

Stage 3:
Reverse culture shock stage

Stage 4:
Re-adjustment stage



SO HOW DO I HANDLE IT?

Stage 1

- Leave-taking and departure

Stage 2

- Honeymoon stage

Stage 3

- Reverse culture shock stage

Stage 4

- Re-adjustment stage

STAGE 1

LEAVE-TAKING AND DEPARTURE

1. Seek closure abroad – farewell parties.
2. Prepare family/friends at home.
3. Get someone to organise a welcome home party.
4. Check new responsibilities at home/what the new term looks like at uni.
5. Ensure you prepare for university.
6. Contact student support to ask what support is available.

Prepare.

Say goodbye.

Keep in contact.

STAGE 2

HONEYMOON

1. So nice to be home!
2. Vacation land home!
3. Notice changes. Don't judge.
4. You're aware you have matured, they haven't

STAGE 3: REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

1. You feel you're taken for granted.
2. No assistance
3. No interest in your experience
4. Maybe you give up / resign in haste.
5. You feel marginalised.
6. You feel you have minority status in your own country.

‘Discovering your minority status can be unsettling, even frightening: you feel misunderstood, alienated and alone in your own country.’

STAGE 4 RE-ADJUSTMENT

- You achieve balance.
- Routines re-established/ new routines established
- Less anxiety and doubt
- Objective judgement of experience

HOW TO MINIMISE REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK 1

Think ahead:

1. What are you going to do when you get home?
2. Will there be things you've learned overseas you want to use at home?
How?
3. Look for ways to validate the overseas experience. (meet the diaspora of the country you've been in, listen to music, read books about it, tell your friends and other students about it, have a class discussion about where you've been and what it was like.)
4. If you feel depressed or need support, talk to friends you trust, arrange with your school or college for mentoring or counselling.

HOW TO MINIMISE REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK 2

At university / work:

- Find out how things have changed at home and don't get upset.
- Maybe have 'coming home' party to catch up with everyone.
- Keep in touch with overseas friends via social media.
- Identify a personal mentor you can rely on.
- Talk to others who've studied abroad. What was it like for them?
- How did they adapt?
- Don't jump to conclusions. See what lessons you can learn and apply them.

TOP TIPS



THE INCA FRAMEWORK INTERCULTURAL ASSESSMENT

INCA Framework (assessor version)

Level ⇒ Competence ⇒	1 'Basic'	2 'Intermediate'	3 'Full'
General profile	The candidate at this level is on the ladder of progression. They will be disposed to deal positively with the situation. Their responses to it will be piecemeal and improvised rather than principled, even though mostly successful in avoiding short term difficulties. These will be based on fragmentary information.	The candidate at this level has begun to induce simple principles to apply to the situation, rather than improvise reactively in response to isolated features of it. There will be evidence of a basic strategy and some coherent knowledge for dealing with situations.	The candidate at this level will combine a strategic and principled approach to a situation to take the role of a mediator seeking to bring about the most favourable outcome. Knowledge of their own culture and that of others, including work parameters, will be both coherent and sophisticated.
i) Tolerance of ambiguity	1T Deals with ambiguity on a one-off basis, responding to items as they arise. May be overwhelmed by ambiguous situations which imply high involvement.	2T Has begun to acquire a repertoire of approaches to cope with ambiguities in low-involvement situations. Begins to accept ambiguity as a challenge.	3T Is constantly aware of the possibility of ambiguity. When it occurs, he/she tolerates and manages it.
ii) Behavioural flexibility	1B Adopts a reactive/defensive approach to situations. Learns from isolated experiences in a rather unsystematic way.	2B Previous experience of required behaviour begins to influence behaviour in everyday parallel situations. Sometimes takes the initiative in adopting/conforming to other cultures' behaviour patterns.	3B Is ready and able to adopt appropriate behaviour in job-specific situations from a broad and well-understood repertoire
iii) Communicative awareness	1C Attempts to relate problems of intercultural interaction to different communicative conventions, but lacks the necessary knowledge for identifying differences; tends to hold on to his own conventions and expects adaptation from others; is aware of difficulties in interaction with non-native-speakers, but has not yet evolved principles to guide the choice of (metacommunication, clarification or simplification) strategies.	2C Begins to relate problems of intercultural interaction to conflicting communicative conventions and attempts to clarify his own or to adapt to the conventions of others. Uses a limited repertoire of strategies (metacommunication, clarification, simplification) to solve and prevent problems when interacting with a non-native-speaker.	3C Is able to relate problems of intercultural interaction to conflicting communicative conventions and is aware of their effects on the communication process; is able to identify and ready to adapt to different communicative conventions, or to negotiate new discourse rules in order to prevent or clarify misunderstandings; uses a variety of strategies (metacommunication, clarification, simplification) to prevent, to solve, and to mediate problems when interacting with a non-native-speaker.

SIX QUALITIES OF MULTICULTURALITY

- AVOID OTHERING – Be inclusive.
- EXERCISE PATIENCE- tolerance of ambiguity
- BE FLEXIBLE – Local solutions may be better.
- SHOW EMPATHY – Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- SHOW INTEREST – Show interest in your colleague's/client's culture.
- LOCAL LANGUAGE – Learn a few words.

(Michael Byram)

https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/inca-project-intercultural-competence-assessment_en



THANK YOU!

Let us know if we can help you further.

For more information, feel free to contact:

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