Coping With Reverse Culture Shock

Living in Australia for a year or more can change you in surprising ways. Just as you adjusted to life in Australia years ago, you will have to get used to living back home, which may not be the same “home” you remember.

Going home involves two transitions – moving from the student world to the employment world, and moving from your second culture back to your home culture. If you are prepared from the beginning and know how to keep changes in perspective, returning home will be far less of a shock.

You are not the same as when you left home. Your behaviour and communication patterns may have changed as well as your hierarchy of values. Therefore, anticipate where conflict is likely to occur with traditional home behaviour, communication, and values.

Prepare for leaving Australia

The pain of adapting and readapting brings about enormous personal growth. In years to come you will look back on these transitions as periods of positive growth.

Take time to say goodbye. Attend all the going-away parties and allow friends to see you off at the airport. Abruptly ending relationships and leaving a social and physical environment is much more stressful than slowly letting go.

Bring some of Australia home. Before leaving, remember to subscribe to journals in your field of study, join Alumni associations, and be sure to have the addresses of the friends you are leaving. During your first few months back home, writing and phoning these friends will help you cope as much as letters and phone calls from home helped you adjust when you first came to Australia.

Use the coping strategies you developed while you were overseas. You will have learnt many coping and survival skills during your stay in Australia – now apply this learning and those skills as you go through reverse culture shock.

Realise that both culture shock and reverse culture shock are normal and beneficial. You are not alone. Most people return home more self confident, flexible, tolerant, creative, and with a widened world-view. The pain of adapting and readapting brings about enormous personal growth. In years to come you will look back on these transitions as periods of positive growth. Your experiences will have enabled you to understand your own culture better. You also will have developed the ability to be tolerant of cultural differences and will have become more flexible as an individual and as an employee.


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