

8. Other Ways of Caring for Ourselves

Looking After Ourselves Physically

It may sound obvious but the simple things may a big difference:

- **Sleep:** Make sure you get enough sleep
- **Diet:** Eat well, even if you find your appetite has temporarily deserted you
- **Exercise:** Get some physical exercise



Establishing a Routine

It will inevitable change as you settle in and find out more about your new home, but try to find a routine at the earliest opportunity - especially if you have children with you. One of the symptoms of culture shock is a feeling of being out of control, taking back control over even small things will foster feelings of confidence and coping.

Enjoying Ourselves

Up to now, we have spoken mainly about the struggles you may face - you will also have many positive experiences, so make the most of them! Every culture has a wonderful array of new experiences to enjoy!

Take Time to Reflect

1. What do you enjoy doing most in your home context? Can you do the same things in your new home, or something similar?
2. How do you best unwind and relax - with company or by spending time on your own? How can you make time for this?
3. What opportunities does your new home offer? What do locals do to relax and have fun?

Making Friends

As we go through culture shock, the temptation is to spend lots of time with fellow ex-pats, visit coffee shops, shopping malls and western restaurants if they are available, and spend evenings watching box sets of Downton Abbey. These things aren't wrong, but you must

strike a balance and not allow them to become your sole means of coping, otherwise you will never acclimatise to your new culture. Whatever happens refuse to isolate yourself from those around you.

Don't delay in making new friends, meeting your new neighbours etc. Asking for help in practical matters is one great way of getting to know them. They will generally love to offer advice about local tradesmen, shops, services etc.

When you get to know people, be proactively hospitable and ask them round, as well as seeking to visit them in their homes.

Pressing on Towards the Goal

“But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way” - Philippians 3v13-15

It is wonderfully reassuring that the Bible is full of very real and honest stories of ordinary people, and their shortcomings. Knowing that even Jesus faced emotional turmoil in the garden of Gethsemane gives us great comfort - our great High Priest is familiar with our weaknesses.

But the Bible is also full of these same people demonstrating great faith and perseverance, pressing on and not giving up in the midst of challenge.

Remembering Why You Are There

As you come to terms with the physical, emotional and spiritual challenges of working cross- culturally, it is vital to keep coming back to why you are there.

This is likely to include:

- God's determination to have a magnificent bride for his Son from every tribe, tongue and culture. Serving him in other cultures is part of this big story
- Our desire is to come to understand, love, respect and bless the people and their culture
- Reminding ourselves of what God has called us to do, what He has said to us personally, his promises in scripture, his promise to be with us etc

At the same time, we also need to be real and honest as sometimes it is tough, and we need to persevere by God's grace and with the support of others. Ultimately, we must remember that all of this is temporary, that we are waiting for a “better city”, and that the “light and momentary” troubles we may experience are achieving something far greater in eternity to come!

Concluding Thoughts

This document has covered a range of ways in which we can adapt to a new culture, overcome culture shock and look after ourselves emotionally, spiritually and physically.

Everyone will walk through and experience these things differently, but hopefully applying the principles above will be of help to you!

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1) Look back on the six different sections in this session

- What are the main learning points for you personally?
- What do you need to do about these now?
- What do you need to do about these when you move to a new culture?

2) Which of the five “wrong” and “right” attitudes do you recognise within yourself? How can you helpfully work on these in the coming months?

3) What are you going to miss most about your home country and culture? (including things that seem trivial or material e.g. cheddar cheese and sausages!)

- Having some familiar items around you can help mitigate against that sense of loss
- What will you take with you for this purpose?