

Getting Started with International Friendships



International Student Ministry Inc.

**A Gospel-Centered Ministry of Friendship and Hospitality
among International Students, Spouses, and Children**



Importance of Friendship

You can make a difference!

Thank you for reaching out with friendship and love to international students and their families, helping them to practice speaking English, learning about American culture, and showing and sharing your Christian faith through conversation. Your friendship with an international student can be a “make it or break it” situation for them and their success while in the United States. Be sensitive to the needs, desires, interests, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds of the students. Be patient, flexible, and adaptable to what’s happening as you engage in friendship. Be prepared to be amazed at what God can do through you!



What internationals are feeling

- Fear
- Being misunderstood
- Excitement about new experience
- Where should I go for...?
- Isolation
- Sadness
- Homesick
- Stress
- Confusion

What you may be feeling

- Fear
- Being misunderstood
- Excitement about new experience
- What should I say?
- Wanting to help
- Nervous
- Desire to share

Be a good listener!

Being a good listener is important in all of our relationships, but it is especially important when talking with someone who’s first language is not English.

- Talk slowly while being natural in your speech
- Be clear in pronunciation
- Be sure to explain slang, idioms, and advanced vocabulary
- Talk about topics of mutual interest
- Provide feedback and ask clarifying and open-ended questions
- Don’t be afraid of silence—in many cultures silence is a way of showing respect, providing mental rest, or transitioning between topics
- Be patient

Quotes from International Students

"[We have] different understandings of life, I guess."

Peruvian student

"America is not an easy place to live as a foreigner — xenophobia, narrow-mindedness, prejudice..."

Northern Irish student

Being an Effective Cultural Guide

- Learn from the students as much about their cultures as you share about your own
- Examine similarities, as well as the difference, between the cultures
- Avoid being judgmental
- Take time to explore the student's perceptions and conclusions by following up with an observation or question of your own
- Explore cultural meanings found in words, phrases, and gestures



Communicating Across Cultures

Culture represents the ways and means by which human beings deal with universal human situations and problems using a variety of culture-specific patterns related to values, beliefs, and behaviors in a given social group. Culture includes all those things that make up our daily lives, including social relations, religion, art, beliefs, values, clothes, food, marriage, child rearing, family, education, entertainment, clothing, housing, work and laws.

When people share the same culture, they don't have to spend a lot of time agonizing over what to do or how to act appropriately. Their "cultural map" helps them decide what type of clothes to wear, what side of the street to drive on, and whether to bow or shake hands when meeting someone.

But international students who are new to this country will not have the U.S. cultural map at their disposal. Instead, they will constantly have to be thinking about what to do, even in the apparently simplest social situations. Cultural learning is a selective or combining process in which the international student decides which elements of the native culture to retain and which elements of the new culture to adapt or adopt. The learner's new cultural identity will present a mixture of the native and the new culture.





Getting Started

International student ministry is all about relationships! Jesus said we are to love one another. Before meeting with your new international friend be sure to pray. Ask God to help you reach out with love and compassion in friendship.

- Email your new international friend to arrange a time to meet.
- It's a good idea to meet on or near campus, somewhere that is easy to get to, as most international students do not have cars.
- When you first meet your new friend, make sure you learn how to pronounce his/her name correctly and ask how he/she would like to be called.
- After your first meeting, schedule a time to meet with him/her again. Many internationals don't know how to interpret the vague invitation, "come over any time."
- If you feel comfortable with your new friend, invite him/her to your home for a meal, coffee/tea, dessert, or for an activity. When offering your new international friend with a refreshment, note that you might have to offer it several times. In some countries it is impolite to accept the first or second time an offer is made.

Practical Ways to Help your International Friend

- Consistently pray for your friend
- Offer to help him/her find furniture, kitchen appliances, clothes or other necessities
- Give him/her some safety tips about walking around town and local laws
- Keep in touch via email, text, phone and face-to-face meetings
- Be patient and understanding about "time" — your friend's culture may not be a time-controlled culture
- Be willing to share your own personal life, including joys and struggles
- Help your friend with English language, idioms, and slang
- At an appropriate time, give your friend a Bible in his/her native language or in English
- Watch "The JESUS Film" or other Bible story movie together
- Invite your friend to Bible study or your church's worship service



“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Philippians 2:4



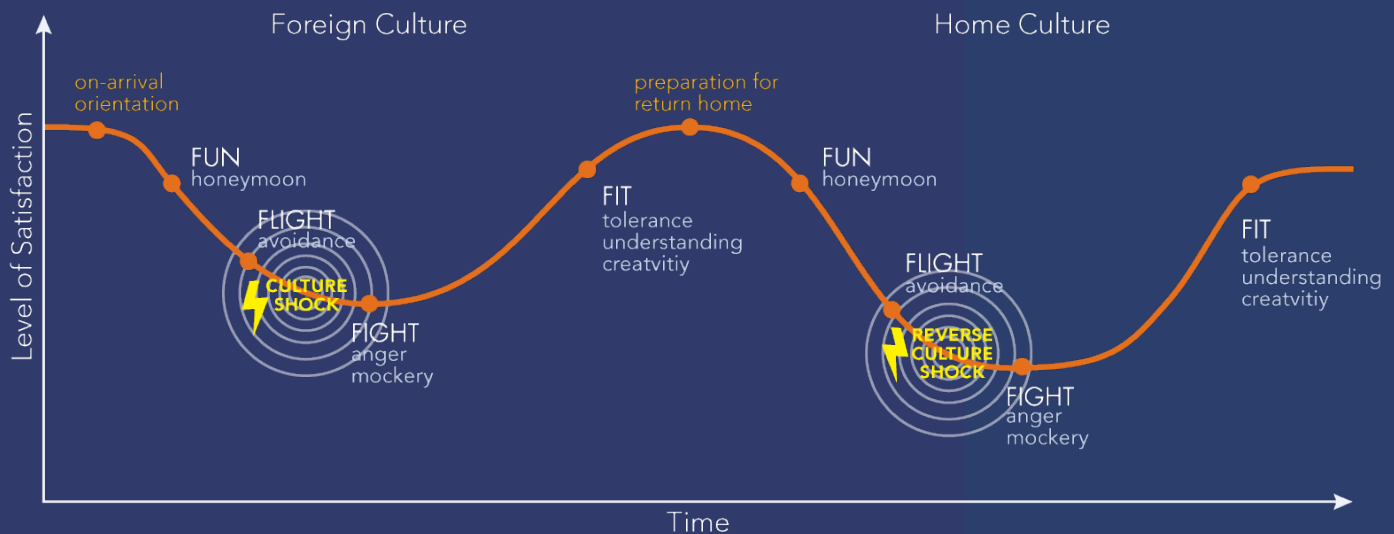
Things to Do with your International Friend

- Invite your new friend to your home and teach him/her how to make an American dish. Have him/her teach you how to make something from his/her country.
- Go to a sports event, concert, or play together
- Attend a community event or festival together
- Take your friend on a tour of the city.
- Introduce your friend to sights around the city — farmer’s market, zoo, botanical gardens, supermarkets, malls, local parks, museums, etc.
- Find out your international friend’s birthday and send a card, or plan a special get-together on that day
- Invite them to join your family for special holidays — Christmas, Thanksgiving, July 4th, Memorial Day, Labor Day
- Have a picnic or BBQ at your home with friends or church members and invite your international friend
- Set up a weekly conversation time to practice English, pronunciation, idioms, slang, etc.



Understanding Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock

STAGES OF TRANSITION



One may actually experience several high and low points in each transition. Also, multiple and simultaneous "U" curves may be experienced, with academic adjustment happening at a different rate than social or emotional transition, for example.

This diagram is available as a bookmark through the InterVarsity Store at tiny.cc/bkmmk

Lisa Espineli Chinn & David Pollock © 2011 InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA

Life in another culture is not easy and international students will experience a lot of ups and downs. You can help them assimilate into American culture by better understanding the different stages of culture shock. Incidentally, international students will experience the same stages when they return to their home countries.

- Fun Stage — excitement about being in a new place
- Flight Stage — homesickness and loneliness
- Fight Stage — frustration and criticism
- Fit Stage — understanding and feeling comfortable

Be a Storyteller

- Storytelling is a universal form of communication
- Stories are powerful, memorable and facilitate worldview change
- Approximately 75% of the Bible is story and Jesus taught through stories
- Share God's story with your international friend
- Tell of your own personal faith stories
- Live the story... be a living witness of God's continuous work in your life and family

"Every people, nation and community have stories and myths that preserve and prolong the traditions that give them their identity... A country without its story has ceased to exist. A humanity without its story has lost its soul."

(William Bausch, Storytelling: Imagination and Faith)



Sharing Your Story

Think about your own story. How can you use your personal faith story to reach out to your international friend? Sharing YOUR story will make a huge impact! All of us have a story to share. As you spend time with your international friend, look for teachable moments and everyday occurrences to share about God.

- Where do you see God working in your life right now?
- How did you become a Christian?
- How has life changed since becoming a Christian?
- Model Christ's love and truth through your family, community, and individuals through the context of life
- Much of what we learn is "caught" rather than "taught"
- Involve your international friend in experiencing and sharing life with you and your family/friends
- Your international friend will see the love that is between you and others in your life, for "all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34-35)
- We are storytellers, but allow God to write the story in each of the international students



“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 4:6

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16



The International Student Ministry Inc. website, www.isminc.org, has some helpful resources for English class, events and outreach, and Bible studies.

To become a prayer partner with ISM Inc. or for more information, please contact us at ism@isminc.org or (715) 869-6460.

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