

How to Help Someone Through Culture Shock

Quick reference, one page. Full guide has more depth on every point.

Symptom	What helps	Skip this
Homesickness	Set a regular call time and keep it. Send ordinary updates, not just big news.	Don't say "just distract yourself." Don't compare it to your own experience.
Irritability & anger	Let it land. Say "that sounds exhausting" first. Ask "what was the hardest part?"	Don't argue or defend the culture. Don't take it personally.
Withdrawal & silence	Keep reaching out on schedule. Ask specific questions, not "how are you?"	Don't stop messaging. Don't flood them with "why are you quiet?"
Anxiety & overwhelm	Slow it down. Ask them to name one thing. Ask "advice, or just listen?"	Don't list solutions unasked. Don't say "calm down."
Sleep & appetite changes	Ask directly: how's your sleep, are you eating regularly?	Don't lecture. Don't brush it off if it's gone on for weeks.
Loss of motivation	Ask about one small win. Encourage rest before more effort.	Don't compare it to how excited they were before leaving.
Negative comparisons	Recognize it as a stage. Ask what's underneath the complaint.	Don't defend the new culture or argue the comparison.
Physical complaints	Take it seriously. Help them find a doctor if it doesn't improve.	Don't assume it's "just stress" without checking.

Helps with any symptom: Listen before you problem-solve. Stay in contact on a steady rhythm. Don't compare their experience to yours.

Get a professional involved if you notice: talk of hopelessness, not eating for days, any mention of self-harm, or complete withdrawal for more than two weeks.