



# Minimizing Culture Shock Through Structured Debriefing

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# Prayer





# Overview

- Those serving on cross-cultural missions may experience culture shock.
- There may not be a process in place to debrief.
- Often there is so much focus on the task, processing the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes may be overlooked.
- Those serving cross-culturally short-term, mid-term, and long-term could benefit from identifying the benefits and best practices of debriefing.

# Learning Objectives



1. Discover the ways debriefing can help minimize culture shock.
2. Identify the benefits of pre-briefing, daily debriefing, and post-debriefing while serving on mission.
3. Compare the components of “good debriefing” with “bad debriefing.”



# So, You're Going Overseas!

Get ready  
Get set  
Go!!!





Where Are You Going?





# Things to Consider

- What religions / worldviews are prevalent there?
- What kind of food are you going to eat?
- What kind of weather should you expect? Is it rainy season? Hot season?
- Where will you sleep? Dorm? Hotel?
- Are you part of a team or going alone?
- What kind of preparation will you have before going?

Culture  
Influences  
Everything!

# The Cultural Iceberg





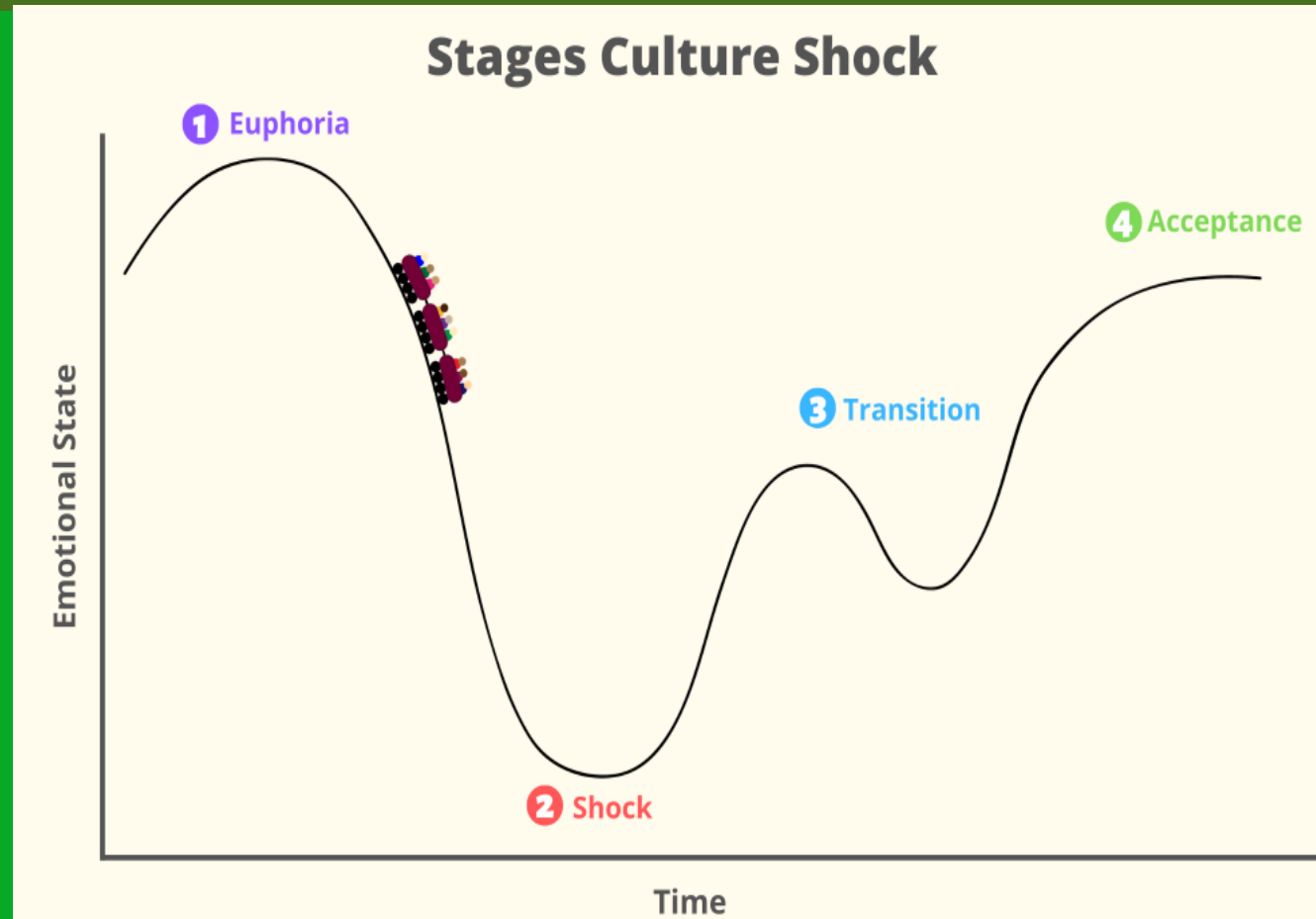
# Understanding Culture

- What are the behaviors and activities you see?
- What is the meaning attributed to the behavior?
- What values are important? What is good or beneficial?
- What beliefs are prevalent?
- What is the worldview? How do people respond to reality?
- A person's worldview is reflected in his or her values and behavior.



# What is Culture Shock?

- Oxford dictionary: the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.
- May start to work without sensitivity, lack of cooperation, rushing through the work, not connecting with those you serve.
- May also see withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and stress.





# What Do You See?





# Strategies for Adapting to New Cultures

- Prayer
- Train before going (orientation).
- Debrief before, during, and after (if short or mid-term experience).
- Recognize any concerns or anxieties beforehand.
- Learn about the new culture.
- Build bridges and lasting relationships.
- Look for the ways the Lord is moving.







# Pre-Briefing and Interviews

- Pre-briefing decreases surprises in country.
- It provides boundaries needed from the beginning, rather than trying to achieve it later.
- Interviewing team helps you identify any challenging behaviors, medical conditions, as well as strengths/ gifts they will be bringing to the team and experience.
- A team covenant and/ or contract also helps minimize culture shock.



# Pre-Departure Tasks

- Meetings for training (culture, teamwork, the task).
- Helps with team / group bonding (means people will be less likely to cause problems).
- Provides leaders with an awareness of potential weaknesses or triggers.
- Deal with issues before the pot boils over.







# Purpose of Debrief

- A debrief is a session to discuss a recently completed project, event, or activity.
- It promotes reflection.
- It focuses on all aspects or domains of learning:
  - Affective (heart)
  - Behavioral (hands)
  - Cognitive (head)

# The Origins of Debriefing

- Military – after World War II
- Critical Incident Debriefing
- Experimental Psychology







# Debriefing Principles

- First, determine who is leading the debrief sessions.
- Second, decide how a biblical perspective will be woven through.
- Foster discussion in a *non-threatening* fashion.
- Capture and leverage “golden or ah-ha” moments.
- Help apply the experience to real-world practice.

# Reflective Practice

- Method used to scrutinize one's own taken-for granted assumptions and professional work practices.
- How has each person “framed” the experience.
- Includes all the emotions, spiritual growth, , and the task.
- Head, heart, hands.







# Factors to Consider in Debriefing

- Objectives
- Complexity of the situation
- Experience level
- Familiarity of people with the environment
- Time available
- Individual personalities and relationships

# Focused Facilitation

## Facilitator Factors to Consider

- Who will facilitate the discussion?
- The facilitator (s) needs to be comfortable leading discussions on a virtual platform (if applicable).
- How many facilitators are needed?
- The facilitator should be able to draw the quiet ones out as well.
- Do not be judgmental.





# The Pearls Healthcare Debriefing Tool

	Objective	Task	Sample Phrases
Setting the Scene	Create a safe context	State the goal of debriefing	Everyone will have time to share. No cross-talk.
Reactions	Explore feelings	Solicit initial reactions and emotions	What was the high point today? What was difficult?
Description	Clarify facts	Develop a shared understanding	So, you mean...
Analysis	Explore situation	Self-reflection	Would you react the same way next time?
Application/ Summary	Identify take-aways	Provide directive feedback as needed	You did a great job in a difficult situation.

# Daily Check-in

## Types of General Questions:

- How is everyone doing so far?
- What questions do you have?
- What things surprised you the most?
- Can occur while you are enjoying a meal or snacks.







## Mid- to End of the Experience

- What were you expecting that didn't happen?
- In what ways were you stretched?
- What was the biggest highlight of your experience?
- What's next? How will this experience impact your life from this point on?

# Practical Aspects – “Good Debriefing”

- ♦ Include ALL participants
- ♦ Use silence appropriately (10 seconds is NOT too long)
- ♦ Be observant to the body language of the group or individual
- ♦ Understand group dynamics







# Things to Avoid – “Bad Debriefing”

- ◆ Not discussing hard days or situations
- ◆ Too much of the facilitator talking
- ◆ Too much medical/technical jargon
- ◆ Too judgmental/condescending
- ◆ Cross-talking

# Other Helpful Questions

- Did you feel prepared for the journey?
  - If so, why?
  - If not, why not?
- What were your first impressions?
- What did you learn about God?
- What did you learn about yourself?





# Heading Home – Before Re-Entry

How and where did you see the Lord at work?

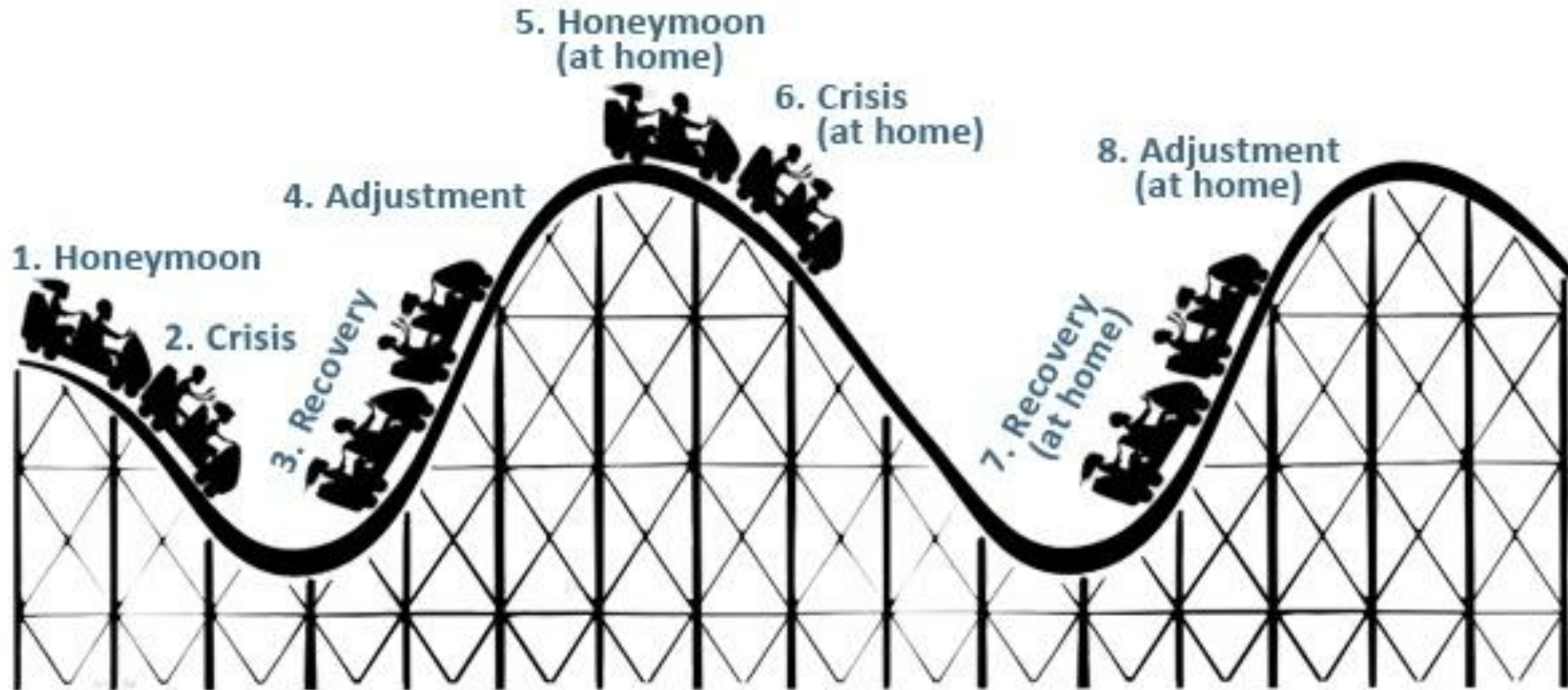
What will be the hardest thing about going home?

What will you miss the most?

Do you think you will do this again?



# Adjust / Readjust or Not







# Goal: Healthy Cross-Cultural Transition

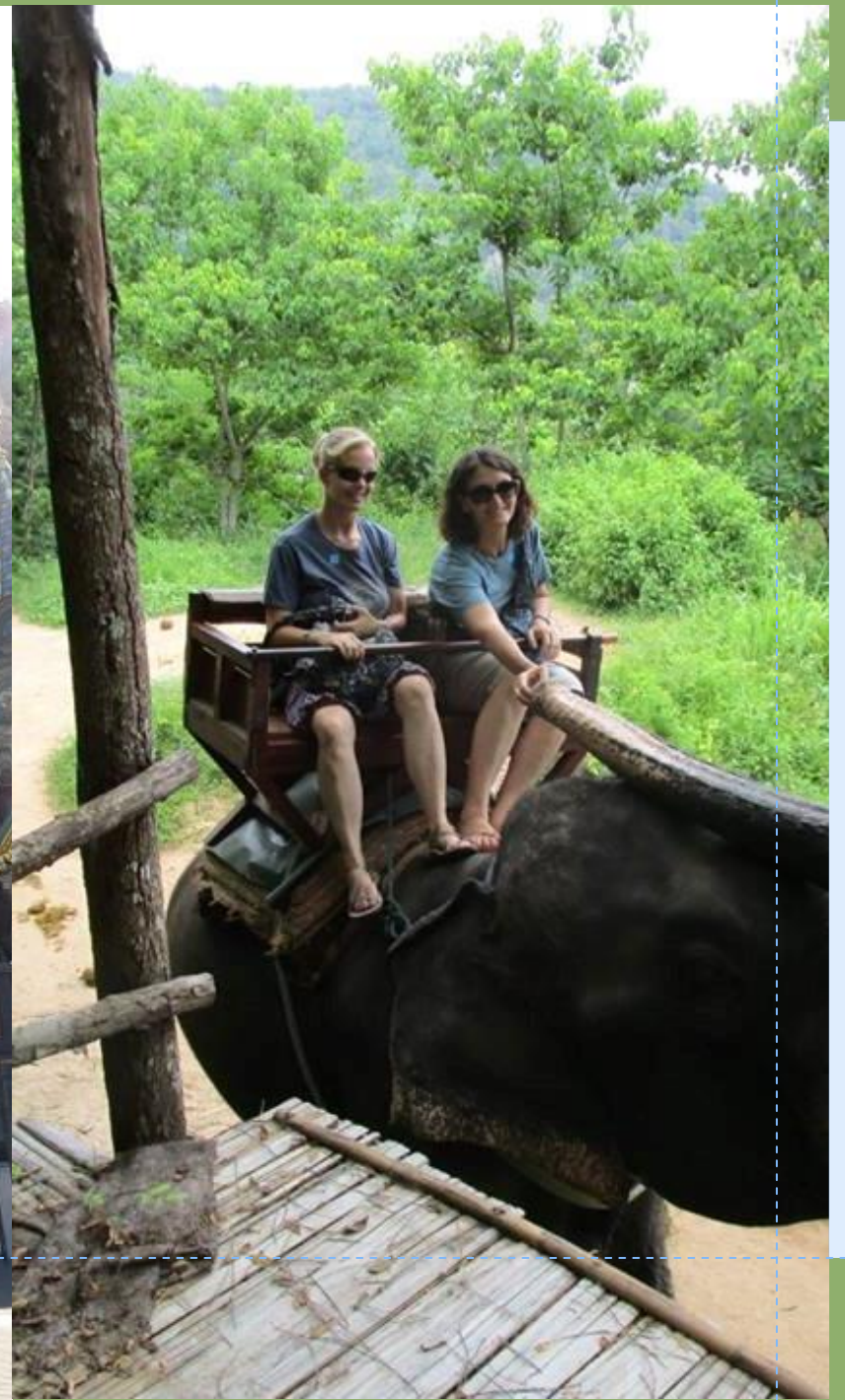
**Mental/Cognitive:** learn about the culture before going.

**Emotional:** plan ahead for ups and downs. Discuss prior situations and how you coped.

**Physical:** be prepared – extra meds, food, comforts.

**Spiritual:** prepare with God's word concerning various situations and the place you will be serving.

Why Go?





To See The Taj  
Mahal?





# For the Lost







For The Hurting, Suffering, and Broken



For The Children





Remote Villages Have  
Never Heard His Name





# Deviation!!

- Plans will change
- There will be conflict
- Be diligent in Bible study
- Debrief everything
- Stay focused on The Lord, not the task



# Glorify Him

We were created to glorify  
the Lord.

Declare His glory among the  
nations, His marvelous  
works among all the  
peoples  
(1 Ch. 16:14, Ps. 96:3).





# Rejoice!

- Remember the good things.
- You learned a lot.
- You have new friends.
- You see the world more clearly.
- But most of all, remember this world is not our home.



# Thank You For Listening to His Call

- We are all called to do His work
- He wants to reach all *ethne* (nations)
- Do it all for His glory
- For the sake of His name



We are to be His witnesses – He created us for a purpose – for His glory. When we are glorifying Him, we are fulfilling our purpose.

# What Questions Do You Have?





# Thank You

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