

Reverse culture shock: Is it real?

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We've all contemplated visiting "developed" countries. Some amongst us have been able to check it off their bucket list already while others still look forward to a drive through streets free of scads of garbage and potholes.

Many of us are close friends with people who frequent or are expatriates in developed countries, allowing us to live their experiences somewhat vicariously. Now that's great and everything, but when that friend says something like "Dost, I couldn't breathe last night, the air here is SO BAD", what do you do?

Other quotes of said friend include, "The elevators here are so tiny" followed by a condescending bout of laughter (mind you, the lift in question belongs to the building he'd lived in for the past 20 years, and been away for just 10 months), "How do you guys tolerate the WiFi here?! I can't even" (once again, sulking about the same WiFi he'd used for years), and "Why did you write the Snapchat caption in Bangla? My foreign friends won't understand".

Yours truly has also been hapless enough to have *actually* witnessed the reactions present below from friends and acquaintances returning from overseas.

With his car unavailable, one dude refused to travel anywhere even remotely distant from his place because he was scared of riding rickshaws.

Another friend took almost a month to readjust to Bangladeshi food. Upon a visit to a renowned fast food joint in the meantime, the look on his face as he gobbled down Western food was priceless.

Now, losing touch with Bangla can be excused as a consequence of not speaking it for years. But I know someone who spent every single night of his stay abroad Skyping with friends and family in fluent Bangla, and yet was unable to string two sentences together in Bangla once he got here.

Then again, some reactions are downright heartwarming: like their expressions upon taking that first



bite of fuchka after ages, or the delight dorm students demonstrate upon tasting home-cooked meals instead of Ramen for dinner.

On a more serious note, these friends might face legitimate predicaments here: certain vehicles whooshing through the wrong side and almost running them over; not knowing their way around overcrowded public transportation; having trouble tolerating the humidity and traffic; readjusting to family life after living independently in dorms for a long period; failing to recall routes back home; and so on.

Some may even plummet into depression and undergo an identity crisis due to reverse culture shock. You might think, "How hard can resettling be? They've lived here before" and snub them with a "get over it", which is potentially the worst thing you could do to help them. They might've pushed themselves to rapidly adapt to new cultures abroad, and now they have to go through it all over again. The pressure to re-conform is just as intense, even for people who've spent less than a year overseas.

As you can deduce already, reverse cultural shock is an actual problem (unless we're dealing with people who just fake it). At least there are support groups or sympathetic counsellors to help cope with culture shock abroad, whereas nothing even remotely similar exists back here. Being friends, the least we can do is try to be empathetic towards their problems – even when some of those problems might be a part of our lives – and make them feel at home again. Although it might be annoying when some of them can't stop going on and on about their adventures abroad, it's more than likely they're just trying to share their elation with you. This may also be a means of coping with their newfound anxiety. And hey, instead of snubbing them, listening wholeheartedly might just give you a pleasantly vicarious experience.

Crystal's a foodaholic whose only life achievement has been being the insanest one in the room involuntarily. Yes, it's her real name. Send her dank memes, good music, and all things aesthetic at crystalafnan@gmail.com

How to deal with superstitious friends



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We all have that one friend who smirks in accomplishment after knocking twice on wood because they believe they have successfully escaped the wrath of the Devil by doing so. Other times, they may refuse to come out of the shelter of their homes if the calendar merges "Friday" and "13" together or goes out of their way to not have to walk under a ladder if one falls in their path.

If you can't think of a single person in your life who has characteristics similar to any of those mentioned above, you're probably it. However, I'll proceed with the assumption that the superstitious person in question is an acquaintance or a friend. Hence, here is a list of pointers to help you better deal with them when needed:

DON'T MOCK OR LAUGH AT THEM

Even if some of the superstitious acts seem downright ridiculous to you, do not voice your disapproval to them. Especially if they're having a bad day. Trust me, you

don't want to hear them justifying their actions for an indefinite number of hours or even worse, make you question your own sanity.

Moreover, laughing or mocking is being plain rude. Everybody should have the free will to believe what they want to without having to pay heed to constant criticism.

BE CONSIDERATE

If you are close with this person, you'll probably know a thing or two about what bothers them the most. If not, then you can always learn new things every time you meet them. However it may be, if you know something you do that disrupts their superstitious beliefs, try to avoid doing those when they are around.

For instance, the next time you have the urge to open up an umbrella indoors before leaving, consider not doing so in their presence.

JOIN IN WITH THEM SOMETIMES

I know this seems a bit hypocritical if you're the type who doesn't believe in superstitions, but joining in sometimes and

giving them a sense of companionship can't be all that bad. If they're having a bad feeling about you and an act of simply tossing spilled salt over your shoulder helps make them worry less, then so be it.

These small gestures will show that you care about them regardless and will go a long way. **DON'T TRY TO CHANGE THEM**

People are what they are. One of the worst things you can do to someone is try to change their choices just because you don't believe in it yourself. The simultaneous existence of multiple personalities and beliefs is what makes a few of us stand out from the crowd. Hence, learning to live in harmony and being more accepting is definitely a better choice than losing a friend entirely.

So at the end of the day, if tying their left shoelaces before their right or checking memes before a big game gives them a sense of good luck, then so be it. As far as we're concerned, an extra bit of motivation never hurt anybody.