



Preparing and Caring for
Beautiful Feet



*How beautiful upon the mountains are the
feet of those who bring good news.*

Isaiah 52:7



*How beautiful are the feet of those who
bring good news!*

Romans 10:15

But mountains,
as we know...



...are hard on feet

How do I know?

--TCK Africa



-- 7 countries, 5 states



--Education: MA, Ph.D., Licensed
Psychologist,
Dissertation: "Culture Shock."

-- Private Practice



--a Jesus follower

--Member Care +/- 40 years

*Preparing Beautiful Feet
for the Rugged Terrain of First Term:*



*Helping Them Build Resilience so the First
Term is not the Last*

Understanding what happens in a First Term

Why is understanding First Term so important?

--Because it is a time of high transition and stress...

--Because those first weeks and months are formative and foundational...

...attitudes, patterns of thinking and behavior are formed then...

...that are hard to change later on...

Who are we?

And how can we help?

- ▶ **How many are from missions/sending agencies?**
- ▶ **How many are representing churches?**
 - ▶ **Pastors? Missions Committee?**
- ▶ **How many are involved in Member Care?**
 - ▶ **In agency? In private practice?**
- ▶ **How many have been overseas, in ministry, two or more years??**

The First Term...

it's not ALL a hard...

***Cross Cultural adjustment is
A GREAT ADVENTURE!***

Fun

Fascinating

Broadening

Intriguing

Hilarious

But parts of First Term can be...

DIFFICULT...

Searing

Painful

Confusing

Stressful

...Deepening

Understanding the First Term Experience

- ▶ **Understanding the First Term Experience**
 - ▶ *Assumptions: We are talking about ADULTS*
 - ▶ *A first term = two or more years in a country that is "foreign" – not one's "home" or "first culture."*
 - ▶ *Both "leaving home" and "cross cultural adjustment" are involved.*
 - ▶ *SOJOURNER is the term used for a person who voluntarily resides in a culture foreign to themselves for a significant period of time and who, most likely will, or may, return to their home culture at some point. □ i.e., not a refugee or immigrant*

CULTURE SHOCK: A Definition

Culture shock is an adjustment reaction syndrome caused by cumulative, multiple, and interactive stressors at the intellectual, behavioral, emotional and psychological levels, of a person recently relocated to an unfamiliar culture; and is characterized by a variety of symptoms of psychological distress.

Possible Symptoms of Culture Shock

- Fatigue
- Depression
- Low self esteem
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Digestive upsets
- Insomnia
- Sleepiness
- Social withdrawal
- Paranoia
- Nervousness
- Negative attitude
- Complaining
- Sadness
- Crying
- Discomfort with "foreigners"
- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Fatigue
- Fatigue

The Multiple Levels of Functioning Affected by Culture Shock:

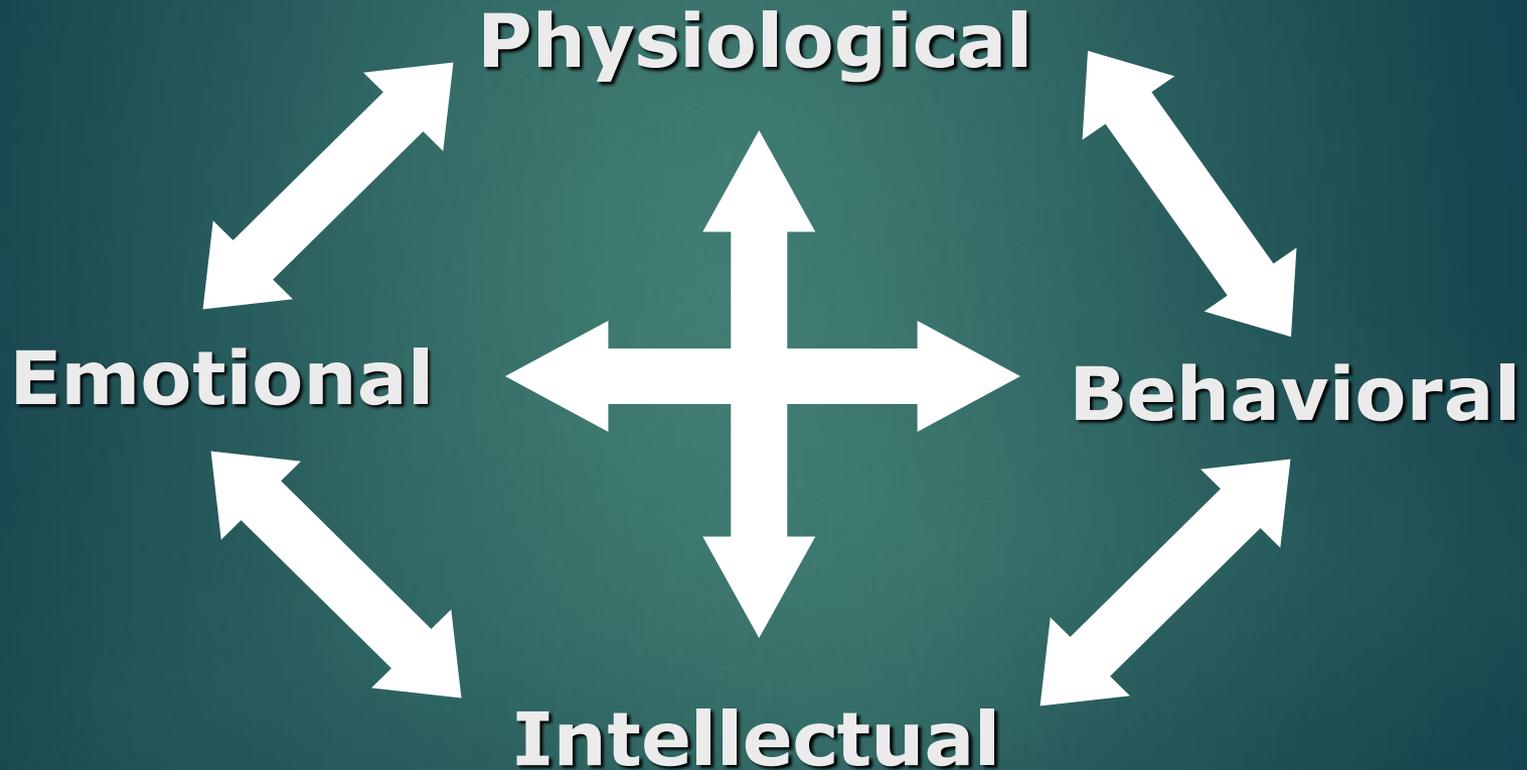
Physiological

Emotional

Behavioral

Intellectual

The Multiple Levels of Functioning Affected by Culture Shock:



Physiological:

- ▶ **Time zone effects and circadian rhythm**
- ▶ **Climate**
- ▶ **Altitude**
- ▶ **Noise, dirt, crowded spaces**
- ▶ **Different foods and bacteria**
- ▶ **Performance of immune system**

Emotional:

- ▶ **During support raising phase:**
 - ▶ **loss of “normal” career path—and an understandable adult role**
 - ▶ **beginning dissolution of “material estate”**
 - ▶ **sale of home, goods, car...**
 - ▶ **quitting jobs, ending roles**
 - ▶ **beginning good-byes with family, friends, church**

Emotional:

First year “overseas”:

Loss of *presence* (proximity, reality as a resource) of:

- ▶ **Family**
- ▶ **Friends**
- ▶ **Pastor**
- ▶ **Church community**
- ▶ **Known/trusted medical professionals**
- ▶ **Home culture customs, holidays, traditions**
- ▶ **Known/familiar places**

Emotional: first year losses, cont.

- ▶ **Linguistic fluency**
 - ▶ Being an articulate adult
- ▶ **Sense of competence**
 - ▶ Knowing one's way around
- ▶ **Sense of belonging**
- ▶ **Stability, predictability**
- ▶ **Security, physical safety**
- ▶ **Identity: role security**
 - ▶ Affected by fear of failure
 - ▶ In front of an audience
 - ▶ "Imposter Syndrome"

Behavioral:

- ▶ Loss of “positive reinforcements” =
(feels like) punishment
 - ▶ Recreations
 - ▶ Exercise
 - ▶ Hobbies
 - ▶ Restaurants/favorite foods
 - ▶ Getting together with friends

*Energy is required to **rebuild**, or **build new** behaviors that feel good in the new environment.*

Intellectual:

- ▶ **A new language**
 - ▶ **New gestures, directions, currency, customs, shopping, cooking...**
- ▶ **Effects of “automaticity”**
- ▶ **Cultural assumptions to learn—**
 - ▶ **and “unlearn”**
 - ▶ *Space ...time ...loss of face ...word given ...gender roles...*

Home culture assumptions/values are not “the right view,” but only “a view”...

...multiple paradigm shifts...

The Multiple Levels of Functioning Affected by Culture Shock:

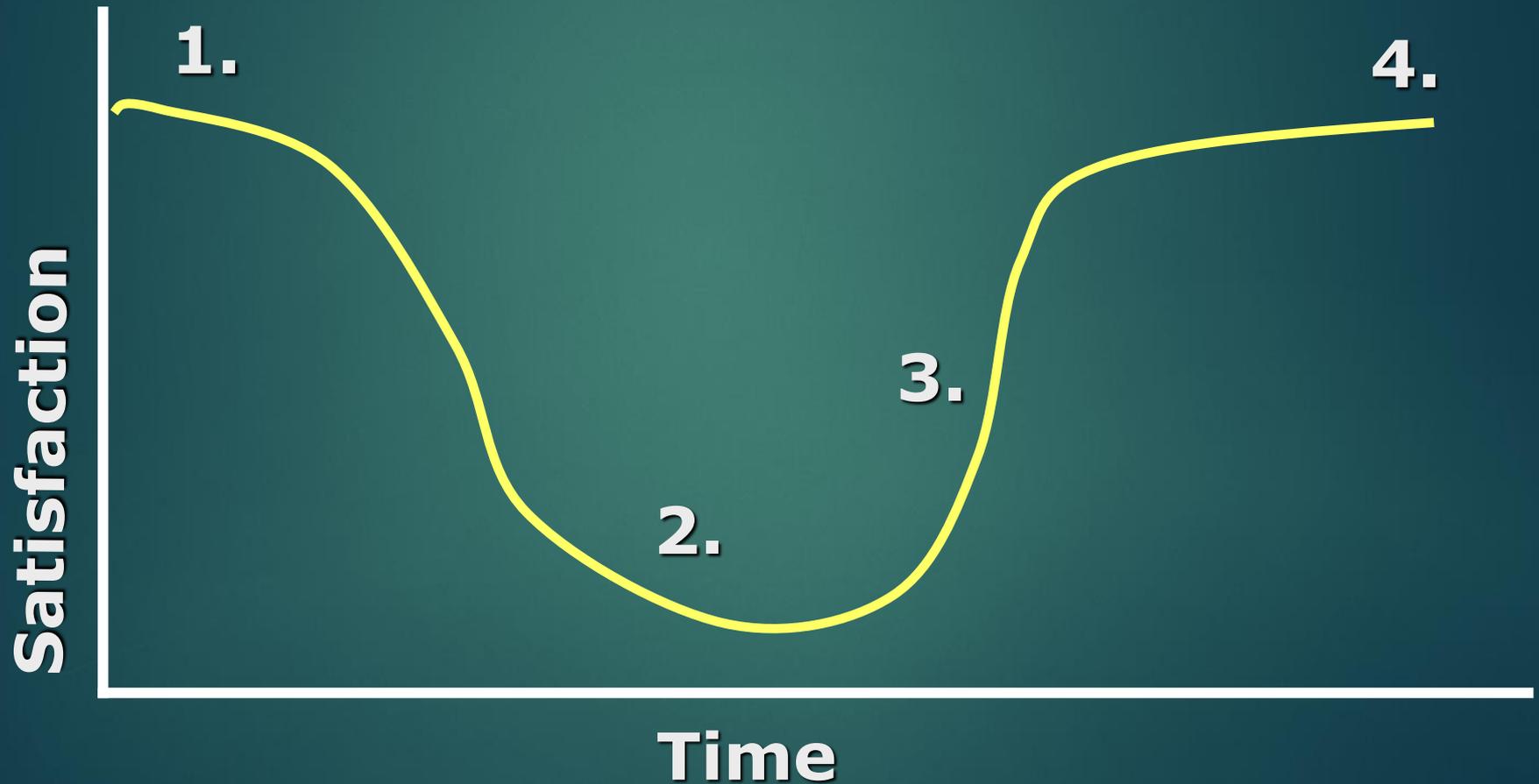


No wonder then...

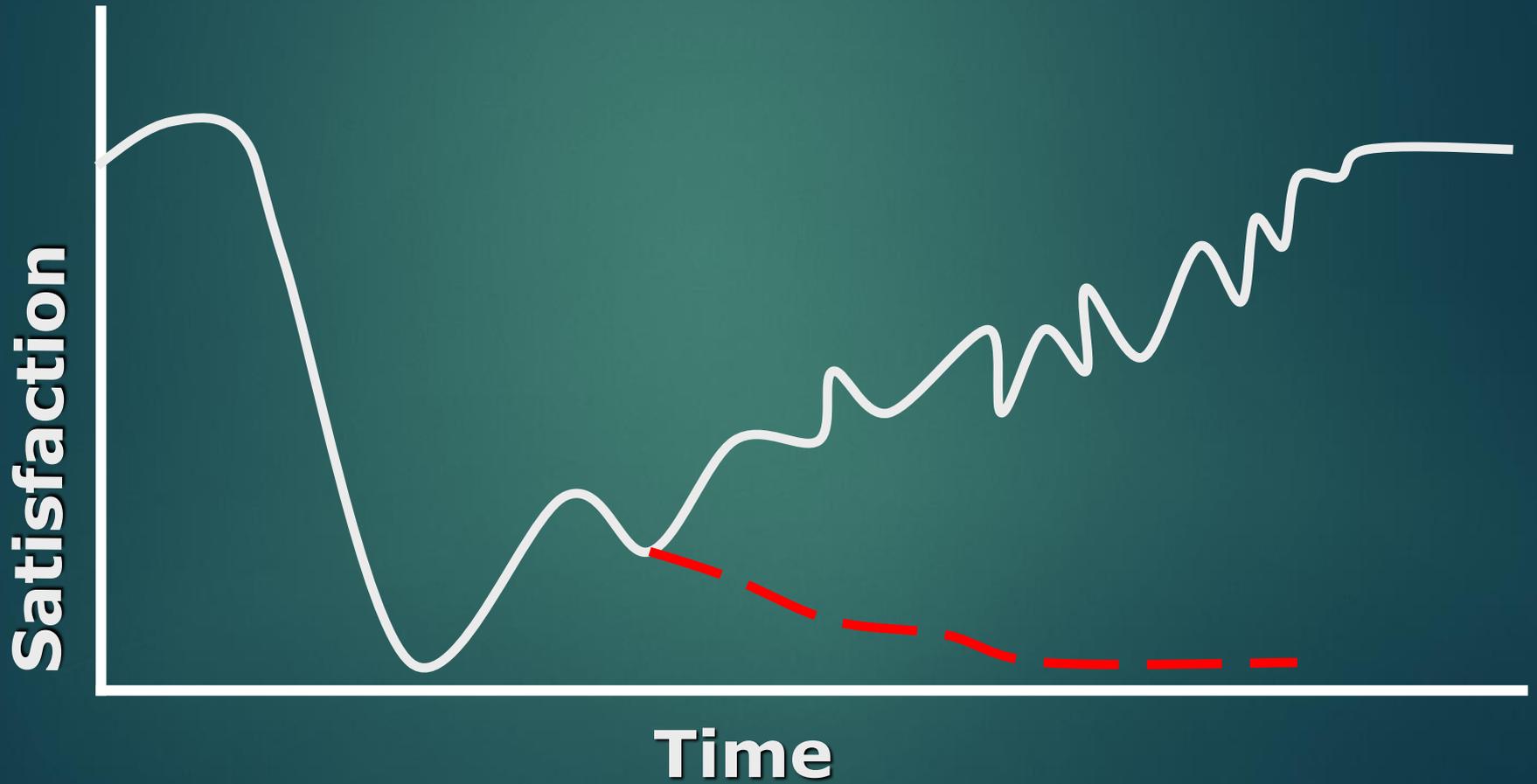
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"foreigners"**
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U-Curve of Adjustment

(Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1963)



Connie's Adaptation



Factors that affect the severity of “the curves” and symptoms:

- ▶ **Presence/difficulty of foreign language**
- ▶ **Level of “development” in the environment**
- ▶ **Urban/rural environment**
- ▶ **Socio-economic level of target population**
- ▶ **Rapidity of adopting “identifiable” role**
- ▶ **Status of “role” in host culture**

7 tasks of the First Term Sojourner:

1. *Manage stress*
2. *Build behavioral reinforcements into the new life*
3. *Grieve the losses*
4. *Re-train the brain*
5. *Maintain and promote spiritual formation*
6. *Learn how to incorporate rest and manage
“pacing”*
7. *Thoughtfully and prayerfully transform the
fundamental identity*

Manage Stress:

- ▶ **Recognize cues and symptoms of stress**
- ▶ **Apply (or learn) coping skills**
 - ▶ **Rest, exercise, recreations, hobbies**
 - ▶ **Reach out for relational support**
 - ▶ **Practice good (Biblical) self talk**
 - ▶ **Scripture and scriptural music**
 - ▶ **What else?**



Build Behavioral Reinforcements:

- ▶ Creatively incorporate previous activities— as possible
- ▶ Intentionally explore new “reinforcers”:

exercise

foods

treks

restaurants

hobbies

music

markets



Beware: the consuming power of technology!
--compartmentalize for sanity

Grieve the Losses

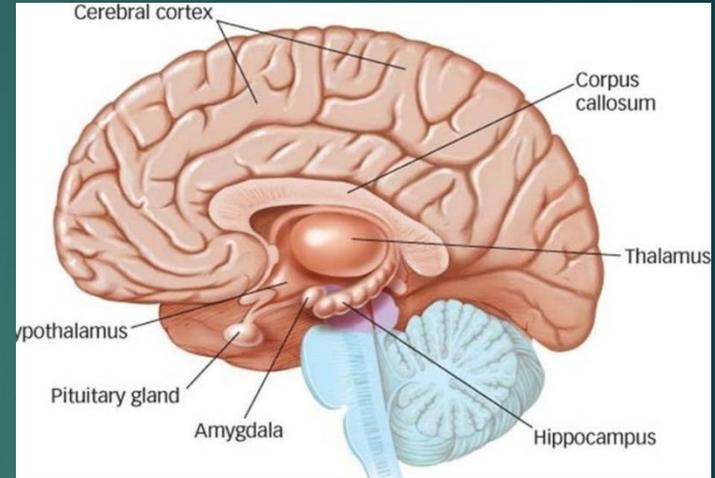


- ▶ **Grieving is a skill that can be learned...**
- ▶ **Recognize cues of sadness, anger, resentment**
- ▶ **Make time, find solitude, give permission, reflect**
- ▶ **Grieving allows acceptance:**
 - ▶ **Absorbs a loss into who we are, but without dominating who we are**
 - ▶ **Allows room for new emotions, experiences**

Grieving well is crucial in the life of beautiful feet!

Re-train the Brain

- ▶ **Retrain in ordinary, daily tasks until automaticity is working**
- ▶ **Language**
- ▶ **Understand and accept “new” assumptions about:
space, time, gender roles, authority, shame,
loss of face, “truth vs. courtesy”**
- ▶ **Multiple paradigm shifts are needed**
 - ▶ **The sojourner needs to be able to “enter” all of them
and act appropriately**





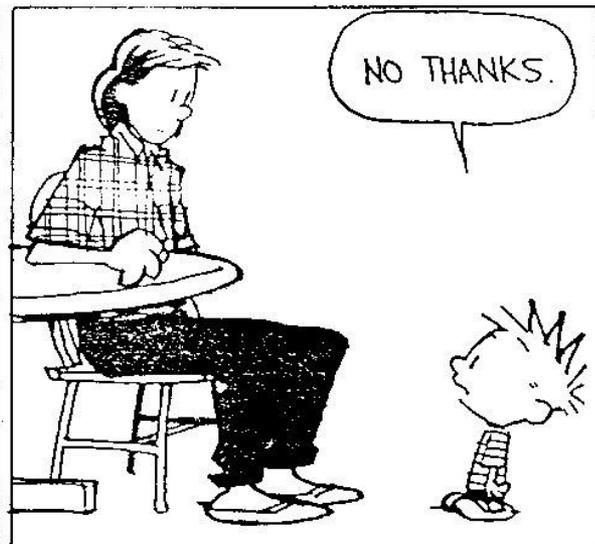
MOM WANTS TO KNOW
IF WE'D LIKE TO GO
TO THE ZOO TODAY.



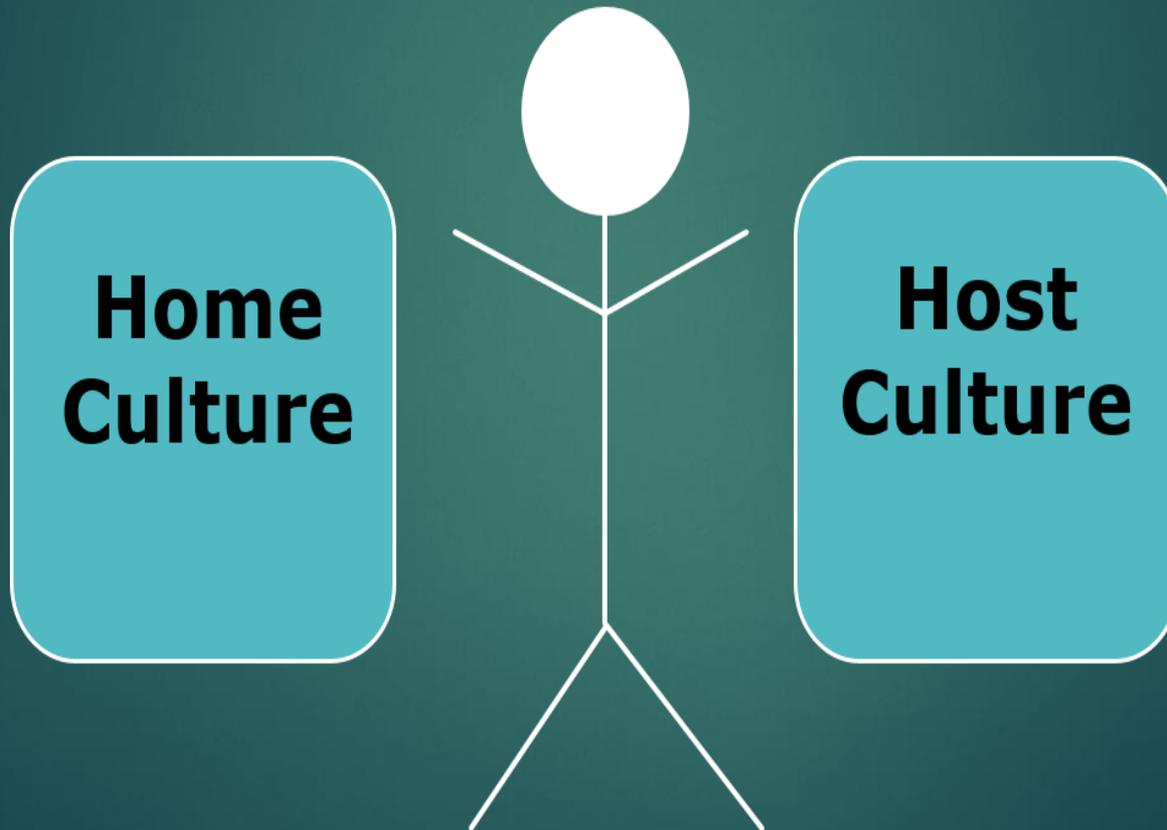
CAN WE TOUR
A PRISON
AFTERWARD?



NO THANKS.



God's Values



Re-train the Brain

***The cultural sojourn is a voyage
that can end in the resocialization
of the sojourner.***

Anderson, International Journal of Intercultural Research,

Vol. 18, No. 3, p. 320

Maintain and deepen *Spiritual Formation*

- ▶ *Maintain spiritual disciplines...*
 - ▶ *even under stress*
- ▶ *Promote new, ongoing spiritual growth*
while:



- doing stress management*
- building new behaviors*
- grieving*
- retraining the brain*

Creatively incorporate rest and pacing

- ▶ *Figure out how to do Sabbath*
- ▶ *Make vacation and time off enough of a priority*
- ▶ *Pacing...*



Thoughtfully transform the fundamental IDENTITY

- ▶ **What did one's identity used to be?**
- ▶ **It usually gets blurred, ambiguous, during support-raising phase...**
- ▶ **For First Term Sojourner, some "stripping" of identity occurs...**
 - ...how much depends on:**
 - difficulty of language**
 - how "Western" the new culture is**
 - level of development**
 - difference between previous and current identity**

Identity...

- ▶ **what the First Termer is used to...
and wants/expects**
- ▶ **whether First Termer steps into an understandable role and/or a valued role**
- ▶ **other role possibilities:**
 - ▶ **ambiguous**
 - ▶ **unknown**
 - ▶ **known but low profile**
 - ▶ **dangerous/insecure**



Identity...

What is “stripping”?

Loss of:

Sense of value, worth, usefulness

Status, prestige

Competence, independence

Becoming...

No One....

Nothing...



God does not need us

***But we still need to
obey***



*The great thing about cross cultural service
is that it keeps you
on your knees*

*which is where you most need to be
anyway.*

So how can we help these beautiful feet...



build resilience and thrive through that first term of mountain hiking?

Helping by: Selecting for resilience

I look for:

- ▶ Strong sense of calling
 - ▶ Patterns of Perseverance
 - ▶ Spiritual disciplines
 - ▶ Theology of suffering
 - ▶ Ability to access help
 - ▶ Past failure/suffering



Helping by: Selecting for resilience

What I watch out for:

- ▶ **Bi-polar disorder... personality disorders**
 - ▶ **OCD maybe...**
- ▶ **Patterns of conflictive, withdrawn, isolated or histrionic... behavior**
- ▶ **History of: anxiety*, depression*, addiction*, eating disorder*, abuse*, dysfunctional family***

**how much recovery is there?*

**Mountain hiking requires good health...
...plus preparation and good equipment**





Helping the First Term Sojourner

- ▶ **Pre-Field:**

- ▶ **Teach:**

- ▶ **Stress management**
 - ▶ **Appropriate self care**
 - ▶ **Behavioral reinforcements**
 - ▶ **Spiritual disciplines**
 - ▶ **Spiritual warfare**
 - ▶ **Theology of suffering**
 - ▶ **Resilience**
 - ▶ ***Give permission for rest and pacing***

Help sojourners be aware...

**Being a person with beautiful feet
often involves:**

"friendly fire"

***i.e., conflict, criticism, lack of support from...
...colleagues, leaders, churches, family***

Helping pre-field and on field:

Help Sojourners by helping an often forgotten population:

Their Parents!

Parents of Missionaries: How to Thrive and Stay Connected When Your Children and Grandchildren Serve Cross-Culturally, by Diane Stortz

National Network of Parents of Missionaries:

www.pomnet.org

Helping the First Term Sojourner

- ▶ **Pre-Field prep, cont.**
 - ▶ **Readings on:**
 - ▶ **Movement history**
 - ▶ **Self Care**
 - ▶ **Boundaries and margin**
 - ▶ **TCKs**
 - ▶ **Cross cultural adjustment**
 - ▶ **Host country culture/history**
 - ▶ **Training in language acquisition and cross cultural adjustment**

...but there are limits to what can be done pre-field...

Helping the First Term Sojourner: On Field

An Ideal:

***A small group of 8-12
first termers***

- Seasoned, compassionate
veterans to facilitate***
- weekly/bi-weekly meetings***
- support group format***
- guided topics: stress management, grieving
losses, cultural assumptions, etc.****
- can be done via Zoom, Skype, group chat***



**** Use the Sojourner Workbook***



SOJOURNER'S WORKBOOK

A GUIDE TO THRIVING CROSS-CULTURALLY

CONNIE BEFUS, PH.D.

Helping the First Term Sojourner

▶ Veteran workers...& “newbies”

▶ Some are
wonderfully helpful



▶ Others... not so much

Choose your veteran helpers carefully!

Helping the First Term Sojourner

- ▶ **Agency helps:**
 - ▶ **“Rope Holders”**
 - ▶ **Retired veterans**
give emotional and
moral support from afar
 - ▶ **“First Term Relief”**



- ▶ **First Term Debriefing Retreats by region**
- ▶ **Discuss “6 Tasks” and normalize process**
- ▶ **Budget line item for “strategic get-away”**
- ▶ **Young family needs**
- ▶ **Singles’ needs**

Helping as a Therapist...

- ▶ **Screen for, and treat:**
 - ▶ **Depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress, addictions, relational issues, family of origin issues...**

- ▶ **But please, please...help them with:**
 - ▶ **Grieving that needs to be done**
 - ▶ **The fundamental identity issues**
 - ▶ **Developing healthy patterns of balanced living**

Conclusions

Discomfort and difficulty are not bad...

*--stress and insecurity help us lean on the Lord and
let His spirit help and shape us*

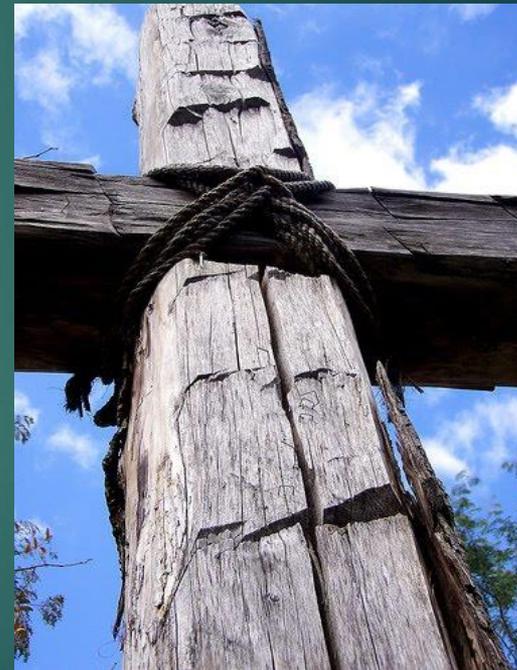
*-- stumbling through the inevitable bumps and "faux pas"
of cross cultural adjustment helps us learn the
assumptions and values of our host country*

--rethink the values of our home country

*--and prayerfully learn to live out God's values
in both*

Conclusions

- ▶ **Hopefully, the first term sojourner survives the hardships of mountain hiking...**
- ▶ **accomplishes the 7 tasks,**
- ▶ **hangs their identity**
on the cross
- ▶ **becomes a grace-full**
“alien” and “sojourner” who
thinks and lives like a
“citizen of heaven”
 - ▶ **Hebrews 11:13-16**
 - ▶ **1 Peter 2:11-16**



Conclusions

- ▶ **To help (before and on the field), we can:**
 - ▶ **Explain, normalize the process**
 - ▶ **Promote/encourage development of:**
 - Spiritual disciplines**
 - Stress management coping skills**
 - Grieving skills**
 - Creative behavioral adaptation**
 - Time for reflection (for a retrained brain)**
 - Development of patterns of rest, pacing**
 - An identity hung nowhere but the cross**
- ▶ **Come alongside as patient, compassionate models of Christ-based identities**

**If we can prepare and encourage them,
and give personal and institutional support
through the hard hiking of First Term...**



perhaps their First Term need not be their last.

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