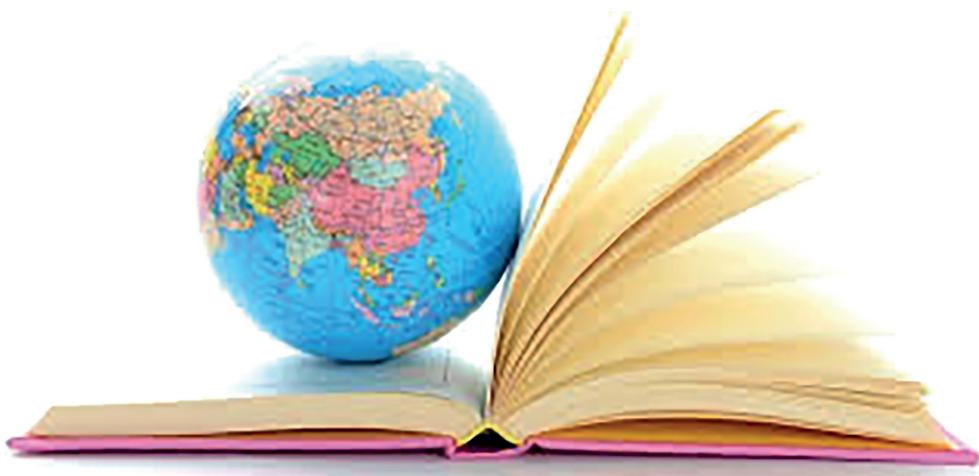
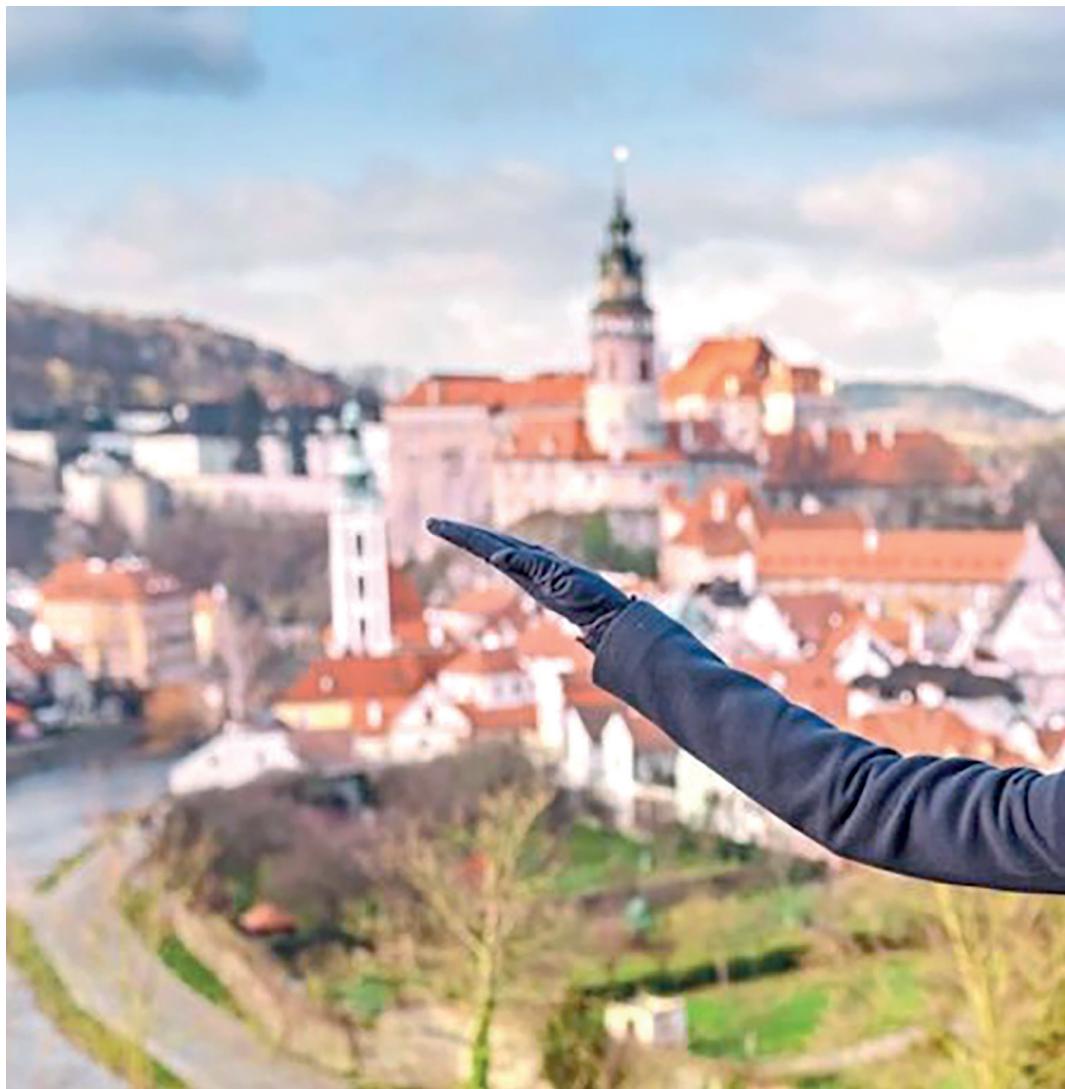




**PAMUKKALE UNIVERSITY
PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AND GİDANCE TRAINING,
APPLICATION, AND RESEARCH CENTER**



STUDYING ABROAD



Studying abroad can be an exciting and challenging experience. Living in a new country, meeting new friends, tasting new cuisines and begin more independent seem very attractive and most of the people greatly enjoy such an experience. On the other hand, moving away from family and friends, adaptation to a new culture, financial issues and being a foreigner may pose some difficulties. Despite its challenges, studying abroad expands horizons.

Many exchange students share the same pleasures and difficulties, but there are some individual differences in the extent to which they go through them. Mostly, the reasons for studying abroad, expectations and previous experiences shape these feelings as well as the adaptation period. Below you may find tips to deal with some common difficulties and suggestions to embrace the gift of studying abroad.



CHALLENGES OF STUDYING ABROAD

Feelings of Being Overwhelmed

At the beginning, you will likely work on learning new procedures such as housing arrangements, transportation, and course registration. All this work may put pressure on you, and you may find yourself overwhelmed.

✓ Suggestions:

- ✓ Make "to do list" and organize them in a Schedule, in small steps.
- ✓ Put realistic expectations on yourself; it will take time to learn and develop your routine.
- ✓ When you feel uncertain about things, instead of working it out yourself, seek information or ask someone. Uncertainty increases anxiety.



Culture Shock

There may be some cultural differences that may lead to difficulties or misunderstandings, especially when you are relating to people. Relationship styles (e.g. collectivistic vs. individualistic), body language, eye contact, personal space, or facial expressions may be difficult to interpret at first. It takes time to find out "where cultural difference stops and where personal difference starts." Further, the food, habits, preferences and expectations of the culture in general may surprise you at first and you may feel uncomfortable.

The normal process of adjustment to a new culture involves 4 stages:

1. Honeymoon: During the first few weeks most people are fascinated by the novelty of everything. This period is full of observations and new discoveries. Like many honeymoons this stage eventually ends.

2. Disintegration: After some time, differences between the old and the new culture become apparent and may create anxiety. Excitement may eventually give way to new and unpleasant feelings of frustration and anger. Language barrier, new climate, accommodation, transportation, safety issues and the unfamiliar types of food may heighten the sense of disconnection from the environment. Due to living in a different country without the familiar social support, some people might experience additional physical, emotional and cognitive difficulties at this stage.

3. Reintegration: Over time, one grows accustomed to the new culture and develops routines. Individuals begin to understand and appreciate the new culture.

4. Autonomy: Finally, individuals can participate fully and comfortably in the host culture. They develop problem-solving skills for dealing with the culture.

✓ Suggestions:

- ✓ Be active in engaging with the new life and culture, and try some of the typical touristic activities such as sightseeing.
- ✓ Organize a routine so that your new life can begin to feel normal.
- ✓ Meet new people, do not isolate yourself or project your anger to people of the host country. You may join student clubs, parties, organizations and activities on campus, etc.
- ✓ Do not let your prejudices and generalizations get in the way of adaptation. Try to avoid mind reading.
- ✓ Take good care of yourself. It is important to keep a healthy diet, sleep well, and exercise.
- ✓ Give yourself time!

Homesickness

You may miss your country, home, family, friends, food, etc. You may have a strong wish to go back. As young adults, it may be difficult to admit that you miss home; but it is natural, universal and fortunately, temporary feeling.

✓ Suggestions:

- ✓ Don't try to avoid or deny homesickness. It's OK to miss home, and it's also OK to enjoy your new life, even in the absence of your family and friends.
- ✓ Allow yourself time to settle and to be involved in campus life. Don't rush into any major decisions about returning home.
- ✓ Make the new environment familiar to you. You may arrange your room or your

daily routine so that you can feel at home.

✓ Review your expectations. Try not to judge yourself for being occasionally blue or moody and try not to judge the environment for being unable to accommodate you. Instead, try being open to experience.

✓ Maintain your contact with your family and friends –to a reasonable extent.

✓ Do not wait for the feelings to fade away, but be active and do something!

Making New Friends

It's difficult to be away from the people that you love and find yourself in middle of total strangers. Cultural differences and the language barrier may make this situation even more difficult. You may feel lonely for some time. Even when you meet people, you may not feel secure and close at first.

✓ Suggestions:

✓ Give yourself and others some time to become familiar.

✓ Join student clubs and campus activities.

✓ Convey the message that you are open to communication by greeting, smiling, etc.

✓ Do not punish yourself for not being a social butterfly in a new culture.

✓ Try not to compare the people you meet with your old friends. Be open to new styles of relating.

Maintaining Relations to Home

You may miss your family, friends, and partner. You may feel that distance dissolves your relationships and fear losing them. You may feel jealous of them for being together and close. If you have a partner at home, it is common to feel insecure and distrustful from time to time. As you face the reality that life there did not stop when you left and you can't be a part of it, you may feel frustrated.

✓ Suggestions:

✓ Keep regular contact with the people you know by phone, e-mail and online social networks.

✓ Be creative in your ways to communicate with them. Do not just write, but introduce them your new life by sending pictures, sharing things you like, etc.

✓ Keep in mind that distance increases misunderstandings. Without the facial expressions and intonation, it is easy to attribute different intentions. So, clarify instead of assuming.

✓ Do not expect your family and friends to guess how you feel. Talk openly about your feelings and thoughts.

Cautions

! Learn what/who/here is safe. Avoid any risky behavior.

! Never get drunk when you are alone or with people you don't know well. Do not use alcohol or drugs as a coping tool.

! Try to maintain a balance between study and leisure time.



GIFTS OF STUDYING ABROAD

Studying abroad is a great opportunity for personal growth. As you open yourself to new experiences and successfully cope with the challenges, you will have:

- A sense of being independent
- Improved coping strategies
- Higher self-esteem
- Better social skills
- A more flexible perspective
- Better understanding of yourself and others

New people, new places, new tastes and new experiences will expand the range of your perceptions about life. You will like some of these experiences and you will hate others, but in the end, you will notice that the World is much bigger than your familiar surroundings and that your potential is much bigger than what you do on a normal day at home.

PROFESSIONAL HELP & PCU

When you feel troubled, do not hesitate to ask for Professional help. No problem is too small or too big to seek help. If you have difficulties about being abroad that disrupt your daily life and well-being, you may contact Psychological Counseling Center (PDREM).

PDREM at Pamukkale University has an office at the main campus. The services include individual counselling, group work, seminars, brochures, tests and referral. All services are free of charge. You may an appointment by e- mail, by phone or by visiting the office.

