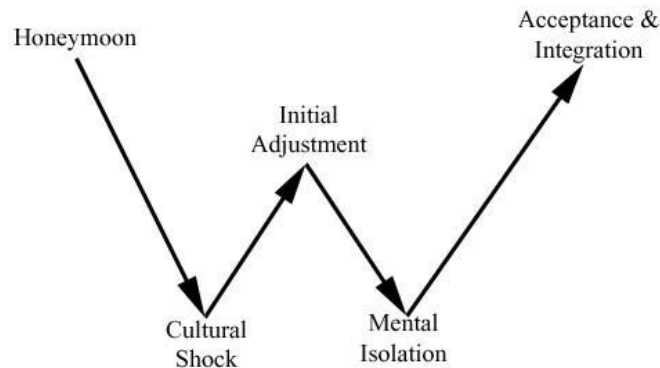


The W-Curve and the First Year of College

Many first-year students experience the following phases while adjusting to college:



The Honeymoon

- Positive mood, anticipation, and excitement usually begins before students arrive on campus
- Some feelings of homesickness, mixed in with all of the fun and energy of a new beginning, is common

Culture Shock

- Newness of college begins to wear off as students deal with the reality of all the adjustments they need to make (i.e., roommates, changes in food choices, diversity that comes from meeting people from different backgrounds and cultures, academic changes)
- Routine tasks become problematic (i.e., where to go shopping, get a haircut, or retrieve medical services)
- Period of positive change in addition to a period of personal conflict and anxiety, and homesickness may increase

Initial Adjustment

- Students experience an upswing as they successfully manage many of the issues that have come their way
- Well being and increased confidence emerge as they feel more able to handle the academic and social environment of college; Regain a sense of normalcy, control, and routine in their lives
- Conflicts and challenges still come and go, but students feel more in the swing of things

Mental Isolation

- Students may feel more isolated as they compare campus culture to their home culture
- Strong feelings of homesickness may begin to surface over semester breaks
- May feel caught between two worlds (home and campus)
- May recognize that their experience in college isn't as perfect as they had envisioned

Acceptance, Integration, and Connectedness

- Feel more connected as they become more involved on campus, gain some history with friends, and get to know some faculty and staff members
- Balance of a more realistic view of the college, with an integration of the good experiences with the challenges
- Less dependence on parents and peers
- Feel as though they have adapted more fully to their new world.

Additional Resources

For some students, the transition to college can be overwhelming and may require more professional support. Students are welcome to meet with a professional from the Counseling Center to address their concerns more fully and establish coping skills that will allow them to more successfully transition to college.