



# Responding Well

## How to respond with grace and make the most of cultural differences.

1. Keep an open mind. The ability to keep opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli is important to intercultural adjustment. Even if you don't understand why people do a particular thing, be careful not to jump to conclusions.
2. Learn to cope with failure. Learning to tolerate failure is critical because everyone fails at something while overseas! The ability to laugh in spite of the circumstances will help you guard against despair.
3. Be flexible. The ability to respond to or tolerate the ambiguity of new situations is very important to intercultural success. Keeping options open and avoiding judgmental behavior helps you adapt well.
4. Maintain a healthy curiosity. Curiosity is the demonstrated desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc. This personality trait is important for intercultural travelers because you need to learn many things in order to adapt to your new environment.
5. Keep realistic expectations. There are strong correlations between positive expectations for an intercultural experience and successful adjustment overseas. Being realistic in what to expect will help you feel prepared for any situation.
6. Be tolerant of differences. A sympathetic understanding of beliefs or practices different from your own is key to successful intercultural adjustment. Just because a custom is different doesn't mean it is wrong.
7. Regard others positively. The ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for other persons is an important part of effective intercultural relations. Try to think of things you really enjoy or like about their culture and embrace differences.
8. Be good guests. As a guest in someone's home, you would never remark about the "dirty" kitchen, the "terrible" food, or the "crazy" seating arrangement. As a traveler you are, in a broad sense, going into someone's "home." Show respect.