

Topic: Cultural Adjustment
(IOM Middle East)

Activity: What Problems Do You Anticipate In America?

Introduction

This is a good introductory exercise to the topic of cultural adaptation. Many participants may have only thought of the positive side of migrating to the U.S., without having given thought to any of the problems. Asking them to think about possible problems has several advantages:

- It takes the pressure off the trainer. It will be the participants and not the trainer who will be identifying the problems.
- It lets the trainer know what problems the participants are most concerned with, and on what areas the trainer should focus.
- Participants will be more motivated to discuss the topic.

Materials

- Large sheets of paper
- Marking pens

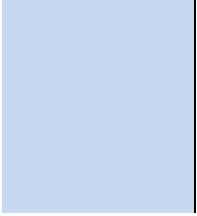
Time

10-30 minutes

Practice

1. Put participants into groups of 3 – 5 people. Hand out one piece of paper and one pen per group.
2. Ask participants to brainstorm and write down all the problems they anticipate they will meet in the United States. Ask them to be very specific.
3. If they run out of ideas, help them. Ask them to identify potential problems unique to women, young children, teenagers, young adults, men, old people, professional people, single people, families, and so forth. In addition, what problems will they face related to work, housing, money, language, health, etc.?
4. After 10 – 15 minutes, have them come together in a large group. Ask each group to share the ideas they came up with. A good way to do this is to ask the spokesperson for each group to give just ONE of their group's ideas, and then continue from group to group with just one, until all groups have finished, then begin a second round.
5. As the groups share their anticipated problems, write them on a piece of flip-chart paper. When the list is finished, read through them again, and ask them how they feel about this list of problems.
6. You will probably get at least a few people who say that looking at this list makes them feel depressed or worried about all of the problems they may encounter. Tell them that it's okay to feel this way, because:
 - a. You would rather have them feel depressed NOW, but have a realistic idea of what to expect in America, than have them go with unrealistic expectations and be depressed AFTER they resettle.
 - b. The people who work with refugees in the U.S. tell us that the main problems Iraqi refugees encounter are due to unrealistic expectations, and we want to help the participants avoid those problems.

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7. Go through the list again, and reassure the participants that each of these areas of concern, and ways of dealing with them, will be dealt with in the course of the CO training. If a particular concern is not typically addressed in CO, then either conduct a brief discussion of the topic now, promise to find materials that deal with the issue, or provide the participants with resources (web links, etc.) so that they can research the topic on their own.

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