

How Can I Make Sure Our Youth Are Culturally Sensitive?

** Sensitivity to different cultures is vitaly important for youth groups to understand. Plan carefully this portion of your training.

What Is Culture Shock?

Culture shock can start when members first see the teeming masses fighting for every millimeter of sidewalk space during Hong Kong's rush hour, smell the stench of the back street alleys of Cairo, or spot abandoned eight-year olds living in the sewers of Colombia. Culture shock also occurs when we miss what we have taken for granted: no hot water for showers, the sanitary conditions of cooking facilities, the frustration of not being able to understand or be understood.

How Can We Prepare?

1. The best thing a team leader can do is prepare the individuals for some sense of how this experience will be different from their home environment. While the trip should be fun, make sure your team understands this is not an exotic vacation where they can work on their tans and drink lemonade under the palm trees. They will be busy working on projects as well as making an effort to form relationships with the local people.
2. Encourage your team to learn as much as they can about the country they will be visiting. Check out the Internet, libraries, talk to other people who have been there. The more you know about a culture the more effective you will be in relating to the people there.
3. Discourage romantic relationships from forming either within the team or with a teammate and a local person. This only causes dissension, confusion and hurt for everyone involved.
4. Learn a few phrases in the language of the country you will be visiting. The local people will appreciate the effort you are making to communicate with them even if it isn't spoken perfectly.



Basic Principles to Live By In Another Culture.

1. Eat what is given to you regardless of how you feel about it.
2. Be sensitive to the dress codes of that culture and follow them accordingly.
3. Be appreciative of the sacrifices the host and hostess may be making in order to accommodate the team (giving up beds, giving the best food they can to the team, etc.)
4. Be flexible in every aspect of the trip. There will inevitably be schedule changes or unexpected circumstances that will require the patience and flexibility of everyone on the team.