

Introduction:

The ability to adapt in new or unfamiliar situations is a crucial life skill. However, in cross-cultural interactions, it can be difficult to decide when we should adapt to a different culture's expectations, or when it might be more appropriate to refrain from enacting unfamiliar customs and norms. Therefore, the goal of this activity is to guide you through this decision-making process and allow you to understand and reflect on your ability to adapt while maintaining a sense of self.

Participant Instructions:

1. Contribute your ideas on the digital platform provided with words, images, or memories that come to mind when considering what "adaptation" means.
2. After you have constructed a definition of adaptation, consider;
 - What has been your experience like with adaptation in the U.S.?
 - What are the consequences of adaptation? For you? For whom you are adapting (or not) to?
3. Watch the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RofpAjqwMa8&t=34s> (A trailer from *The Farewell*) and discuss:
 - What does this clip have to do with adaptation?
 - Who adapts to whom?
 - What influences the characters' decisions to adapt (or not)?
4. Activity: Imagine your first few weeks after moving to the U.S. You will then be presented with a list of cultural behaviors or situations (see Participant Instructions in [Downloads](#)) that you may have encountered. For each of these behaviors or situations, choose whether you would adapt or not adapt to the cultural expectations.
5. Pull up Kahoot on your mobile devices and answer each scenario with one of the following:
 - Adapt to the "local culture"
 - "Be yourself" (do what comes naturally to you)
 - "Being myself works in the local culture"
 - "I blend cultural practices"
6. To make your decisions, you should first ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I have the skills and knowledge I would need to adapt, i.e., can I adapt **effectively**?
 - Do others want or expect me to adapt, i.e., is it **appropriate** to adapt in this situation?
 - Would adapting violate or conflict with my deep-seated morality or ethics, i.e., would adapting be **satisfactory**?
7. Discuss scenarios you would add to the list in small groups.
8. After you have made your decisions, debrief with the following questions:
 - Which scenarios did you add?

- How did it feel to go through these scenarios?
- In what situations did you choose to adapt (or not) and what criteria did you use to make that decision?
- What is important about effective adaptation? What is important about appropriate adaptation? What is important about satisfactory adaptation? Would you add or subtract any criteria (outside of effective, appropriate, and satisfactory)?
- Were there any situations where it was particularly easy or difficult to make a choice to adapt or not? If so, why?
- Were there any instances where you felt the choice to adapt would be dependent on the specific scenario? If so, can you provide the group with an example (i.e., who was involved? where did this scenario take place? when did this scenario happen?, etc.)?
- Which scenarios in your personal life does this bring up as related to different cultures you are part of? Would you add any behaviors or situations to the list?
- Where do you feel the most pressure to adapt? Where have you adapted that you wish you hadn't and/or didn't "have to?"
- Whose responsibility is it to adapt?
- What does it mean to "be yourself?"
- What is the "local culture?"
- Have you experienced anyone adapting to you here in the U.S.? What happened? How did you feel?
- What if we were talking about adapting in your home country context? How would this change your decisions?
- Based on your experiences, what advice would you give someone struggling to adapt to life in the U.S.?
- What did you learn about adapting to different cultures?

Behaviors or Situations:

1. How you dress.
 - Examples: Dressing more modestly or less modestly, dressing according to gender norms, wearing traditional garments, etc.
2. How you style your hair.
 - Examples: Pulling your hair back, wearing your hair down in its natural state, covering your hair, straightening, or curling your hair, etc.
3. Participating in a religious ceremony (for a religion you do not practice).
 - Examples: Praying, taking communion, going on a pilgrimage, meditating, etc.
4. How you interact with someone of a different gender identity.
 - Examples: Making/not making eye contact, taking on either a subservient or dominant role, using an intermediary or making sure you have a chaperone, etc.
5. How you interact with authority figures.
 - Examples: Challenging or not challenging an authority figure, calling them a formal title, or referring to them in more casual terms, etc.
6. The level of affection you show your friend or romantic partner in public.
 - Examples: Kissing or not kissing, holding hands or not holding hands, etc.
7. Undergoing or hiding body modification.
 - Examples: Piercings, tattoos, cosmetic surgery, etc.
8. How you speak.
 - Examples: Language used, vocabulary used, etc.
9. How you use nonverbals in social settings.
 - Examples: Eye contact, distance between you and others, gesturing, etc.
10. How you get to know someone.
 - Examples: Asking or refraining from asking questions and types of questions (i.e., about family, about personal identity, about interests and preferences, about friends, about age), observing, gathering (in groups or one-on-one and setting/purpose of gathering, i.e., more task-focused or more conversational), etc.
11. How you organize, participate in, and show up to social gatherings.
 - Examples: Setting or not setting an end time, guest arrival time, expectations around entering and leaving a host's home, how long in advance you plan/communicate about an event, guest list, food preparation.

12. Accepting food or drink offered to you when it goes against your dietary restrictions or preferences.
 - Examples: Accepting meat when you're a vegetarian, accepting food or drink that is normally off limits due to religious beliefs (pork, shellfish, etc.), accepting alcohol when you normally refrain from drinking, etc.
13. How you interact with people in the service industry (restaurant servers, taxi drivers, etc.)
 - Examples: Tipping or not tipping, calling them by their name or the title of their position, snapping your fingers or yelling to get their attention, etc.
14. How you eat.
 - Examples: Eating with utensils and type of utensils, eating with hands, slurping, etc.
15. How you introduce yourself and how you refer to others.
 - Examples: Which name you use, how you respond to people shortening/lengthening your name, how you shorten/lengthen others' name(s).
16. How you communicate on social media and messaging platforms.
 - Examples: Calling only, video chat, texting only, etc.
17. What time you eat.
 - Examples: Breakfast, lunch, dinner, eating a late dinner, etc.
18. How you share information about yourself.
 - Examples: Sharing personality characteristics, interests, family and friend details, etc.
19. How you indicate where you are from.
 - Examples: Country name, city name, region name, qualifying language, etc.
20. How you seek help.
 - Examples: Asking directly vs indirectly, asking peers or authority figures, etc.