

Introduction:

This lesson plan will challenge study abroad participants (or any participants depending on the context) to adapt and adjust under stress by developing their level of emotional resilience. In this activity, participants will reflect on the things that have “bugged” or annoyed them during their study abroad experience (or more generally to reflect on the things that bug or annoy them) and then brainstorm how to de-stress and better deal with those annoyances.

Facilitator Notes:

There are two worksheet options – one for study abroad and one for general emotional resilience. The facilitator can choose which to use based on participant needs.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Develop a better understanding of their stressors and how to deal with stress (during a study abroad program).

Time:

15 minutes.

Group Size:

Entire group.

Materials:

Emotional Resilience Worksheet (in [Downloads](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Activity instructions:

1. Provide each participant with a copy of whichever Emotional Resilience Worksheet you choose as the facilitator.



2. On the worksheet, participants will first make a list of three to five unresolved things that have been annoying them (during their study abroad program or in general). These could be things they failed to do, things about the new culture or about group travel, things about their roommates or other individuals they may be living with, etc. They should not be required to share this information with others.
3. Then, they should answer the following question about the items on their list: Are any of these things life-threatening? Disgusting? Demeaning? Pathetic? Humorous?
4. Next, they should take a moment to quietly apply their analytic mind to these annoying things and ask themselves the following questions:
 - Is there a pattern?
 - Are they natural phenomena or man-made "stuff"?
 - Are they behaviors or attitudes and, if so, whose?
 - Are they related to cultural perceptions of efficiency or fairness or social justice?
 - Are they related to your identity values?
 - Which of the things that you have identified as annoying do you have the power to have removed from your presence?
 - Which can you make a decision to put up with a little longer?
 - Is there one that you need help addressing? Who will you reach out to for help?
5. In order to survive the presence of annoyances that won't go away, participants should consider the following:
 - Assuming positive intent and trying to re-frame the meaning of a behavior, cultural value, or attitude as either neutral or positive.
 - Discussing one or two of their annoyances with a fellow student (who is not a source of annoyance, that is). Short, structured discussions of annoying things with trusted people can be a good way to "blow off steam" and move forward towards bridging.
 - Learning to use the S.T.O.P. Mindfulness technique:
<https://www.mindful.org/stressing-out-stop/>
 - Taking time to practice one of the personal, psychological, spiritual, or emotional self-care techniques listed in the self-care wheel on the back of the Emotional Resilience Worksheet.