

Introduction:

Are you currently studying abroad or did you just get back from study abroad? Are you also transitioning through a family loss or a national, regional, or worldwide crisis? Are you consistently in situations where you are out of your comfort zone?

If so, and if you are finding yourself constantly being “bugged” by difference or uncertainty, it doesn’t mean you are a bad person. Stressful situations sometimes make it hard for anyone to build bridges across even tiny differences!

Most study abroad participants say they are ready to “step out of their comfort zone.” This willingness helps, but few people are as prepared as they think they are to deal with on-going discomfort.

In times of personal stress (exam week?) or of more widespread social stress (coping with a pandemic or natural disaster), having the ability to tolerate ambiguity and value differences can make you a more successful student, effective leader, better friend and/or a more supportive family member. Emotional resilience is one’s ability to adapt and adjust under stress.

Try the reframing techniques below to de-stress—and recover your best (intercultural) self!

Naming and Taming Your Travel “Bugs”:

1. On the following pages (next to the bug icons), make a list of three to five things that have been annoying you/annoyed you while you study/studied abroad and which are unresolved. These could be things you have failed to do, things about the new culture or about group travel, even things about your roommate or folks at home (you will not be forced to share)!
2. Are any of these things life-threatening? Disgusting? Demeaning? Pathetic? Humorous?
3. Now, take a moment to quietly apply your analytic mind to these annoying things a little further. 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?
4. Which of the things that you have identified as annoying do you have the power to have removed from your presence?
5. Which can you make a decision to put up with a little longer?
6. Is there one that you need help addressing? Who will you reach out to for help?
7. To survive in the presence of annoyances that won’t go away, consider:
 - 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 your 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 the personal, psychological, spiritual, or emotional self-care techniques listed in the self-care wheel at the end of this worksheet.

These are the things that are bugging me:



Use the self-care wheel on the following page to come up with activities to help you de-stress. Try to commit to at least one self-care activity per day for a week. Switch categories from time to time, so that any one activity does not turn into a chore!



Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	