

Preparation for the journey...

As you continue in your preparation in your journey as a JV, our hope for you is to be able to thrive in your new environment, rather than “just survive” each day. This requires a readiness for the whole commitment and openness to embracing the changes ahead with your whole heart, mind, body, and spirit. We invite you to begin preparing, in a holistic way, for your new lifestyle as a volunteer with JVC. The sooner you begin to gradually move towards this lifestyle, even in small ways, the more prepared you will feel to manage the joys and challenges of your placements and new community.

With this in mind, there are three things we invite you to engage with between now and orientation to help yourself not feel so shocked and overwhelmed when you are adjusting to your host community AND to your lifestyle as a JV.

- **READ** -- **this article** on the idea of change versus transition and reflect on its meaning in your life:
 - How do I remember myself going through past changes (to a new home, to college/university, from college to first professional years, to significant changes in my family or personal life)?
 - What was I aware of? What was I not as attentive to that I see now?
 - How did I care for myself in those times?
 - When I am feeling overwhelmed with changes, what have been the red flag behaviors others can see about me or I can see about myself?
 - What can I identify as happening for me *now* in this time of change and transition (leaving school, work, moving, saying goodbyes, etc.)?
 - What do I see in my day to day as my strengths and limitations in managing/coping with this time of transition and change?
 - Is there anything to which I would like to be more attentive in caring for myself at this time?

LISTEN – listen to this podcast on some people’s experiences of having to push themselves to move outside of their comfort zones when having to understand how different cultures understand personal space: <http://n.pr/YFEjaZ>

Another piece that leads to success for volunteers when immersing into another culture whether it be an urban/rural community in the U.S. or a different country context is seeking ways to be comfortable with pushing themselves out of their own comfort zone – so they can meet new people and form real relationships with them. This often requires interacting or socializing with people in new ways that you have never tried before or would have found interesting before:

“I’ve never been into playing cards, but here, that is how my host family spends their evenings, so now, I’m a card player”;
“I have never liked cooking and don’t even know how, but here, women and men do not socialize together so my new found love is cooking; it’s the only way I can build relationships with the women here”.

To be able to move ourselves out of our comfort zones, we must recognize that we will be living with discomfort – a lot of the time – but that is ok because eventually....eventually.... the risks we take bear fruit and enrich our experience and understanding of the culture that is receiving us.

1. **TRY IT!** -- Practice moving yourself out of your comfort zone in small ways....right now, in a more familiar space and pay attention to yourself along the way....

Engage in as many of these as you can, adapting them to the level of what might be uncomfortable or new for you to try....

- Create a tech-free zone in your day (no texting, phone, computer, etc)....and incrementally increase it.
- More face to face time -- spend time at a soup kitchen and instead of serving, sit at a table and converse with the guests.
- Changing pace -- Plan and execute an outing only via in-person communication.
- Choose a new place to visit and navigate there only by asking people along the way for directions
- Observe and suspend judgment -- Go to a public place and people watch – practice describing only what you *see*, not what you interpret is going on or your opinion or thoughts about what you see.
- Be present to now -- Have a conversation with a friend only in and about the present moment (nothing about the past (when I grew up, day at work yesterday, where you went to school, etc.) or future (plans for later, next week, dreams for the future, etc.)
- Be outgoing -- Go to an event where you know no one and engage in at least 3 conversations
- Practice having fewer options -- Eat the same food every meal for a day, a few days, or a week.
- Letting life unfold -- Wander for a few hours with no agenda, see what unfolds.
- Go to a mass in another language or to a different religious service with which you are totally unfamiliar
- TRY ONE OF YOUR OWN....

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (self-awareness and reflection on one's actions is key):

How did it feel to try some of these?

What happened? How did I see myself reacting – what was I thinking, how was I behaving?

What surprised me along the way?

What specifically can I name as the hardest part about it? The most life-giving?

What does this exercise have to do with real life?

What learning can I take from this and be aware of once I begin my time as a JV?