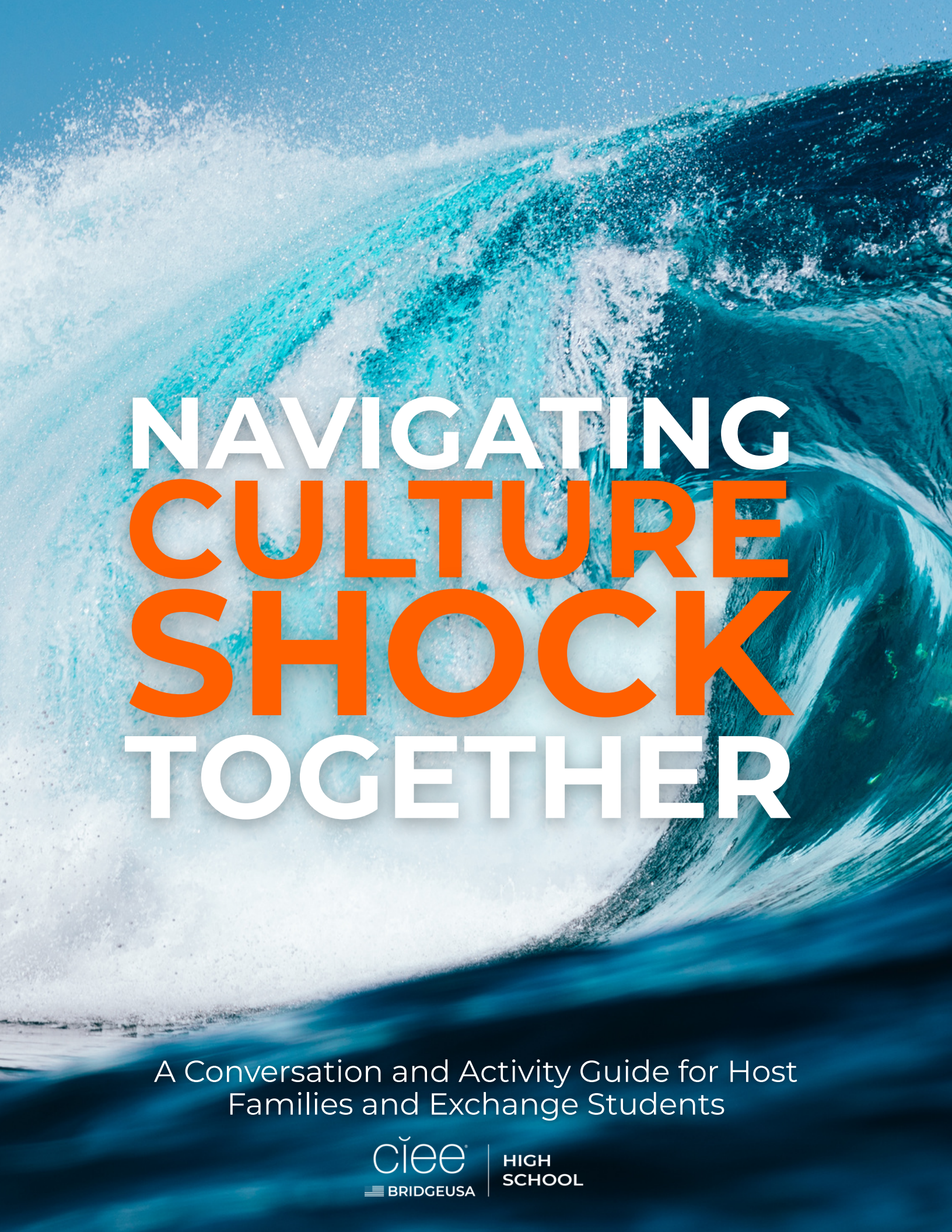




NAVIGATING CULTURE SHOCK TOGETHER

A Conversation and Activity Guide for Host
Families and Exchange Students



HIGH
SCHOOL

Introduction

When you first flip open this guide, you'll notice the cover design. It reflects something important: Culture shock is not a straight line. It moves like the ocean, rising and falling with highs, lows, and everything in between.

For exchange students – and for host families, too – this journey is filled with moments of excitement, confusion, laughter, and sometimes frustration. That's normal. Every “crash” of a wave builds resilience, and every “calm tide” brings growth.

This guide is designed to help you navigate those shifting tides together. Instead of experiencing culture shock alone, you and your student can work as a team – reflecting, sharing, and celebrating along the way.

Think of it like being out on the water:

- The gentle waves are the exciting new discoveries.
- The rough surf is the challenging adjustments.
- And the unexpected splashes? Those are the surprises that make the experience memorable.

How to Use This Workbook

Culture shock is a normal part of adapting to a new country. This workbook is designed to help you and your exchange student talk about challenges, celebrate progress, and learn about each other's cultures.

Section 1: What is Culture Shock?

Culture shock refers to the emotions people may encounter when moving from their home environment to a new cultural setting, especially when going to another country.

Culture shock often shows itself in stages – and there's no one feeling that captures it best. Learn how to identify the stage your student might be in right now.

STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

1. HONEYMOON

What to Expect: Excitement, curiosity, and enthusiasm for new experiences

How to Help: Encourage exploration and celebrate small discoveries together

2. FRUSTRATION

What to Expect: Homesickness, confusion, irritability, or discomfort with cultural differences

How to Help: Be patient, keep routines consistent, and offer emotional support

3. ADJUSTMENT

What to Expect: Growing understanding of language, routines, and expectations

How to Help: Encourage participation in school and community; support independence and confidence

4. ADAPTATION

What to Expect: Feeling at home, calm, connected; embracing new culture

How to Help: Acknowledge their growth and progress and deepen connection to family and community

Section 2: Reflections

Take a moment to reflect on the emotional stages of the cultural experience. Complete the table for both yourself (host) and your student.

Fill out this reflection table at the end of each week or after key experiences. Consider how each stage affected both you and your student.

For each stage, note your emotions and what may have caused them. Reflect on any changes you observed in yourself or your student, and identify lessons learned or successes achieved.

Stage	Host:	Student:
Honeymoon		
Frustration		
Adjustment		
Adaptation		

Which stage do you think your student is experiencing right now? What signs or experiences make you feel that way?

How can you support them in this stage?

Section 3: Wave Check

How are we feeling today?

Choose the emoji that best represents your emotions right now.



What happened that made you feel this way?

Is your wave a gentle ripple, a big crash, or calm waters?
What could help you ride the wave more smoothly tomorrow?

Section 4: Cultural Activities

Since you've invited a student into your home with your family, why not do the things that families do together? Use our list to get started and fill in the remaining spaces with ideas to share cultural exchanges together.

- ☐ **Cook a dish from the student's home country**
- ☐ **Share a "day in the life" video and swap stories**
- ☐ **Visit a local landmark**
- ☐ **Teach each other a song, phrase, or game**
- ☐ **Watch a movie from each culture**
- ☐ **Attend a cultural event together**
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
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Section 5: Coping Toolbox

People cope with their culture shock in different ways. So if your exchange student is struggling, it's time to have a conversation about how you can help them cope.

This activity helps students and host families build a shared "toolbox" of comfort strategies. Students list the things that help them feel grounded, and host families write ways they can offer support. Use this as a conversation starter and update it over time.

Comfort	Student:	Host:
Food	I miss my mom's homemade pasta	Help find ingredients and cook together
Food		
Hobbies		
Sports		
Art/Media		
Outdoors		

Congratulations! You've successfully supported your exchange student through a stage of culture shock. This is an important milestone in their adjustment journey.

If you have additional questions or would like resources on how to further enhance the exchange experience, don't hesitate to reach out.

Take a moment to reflect: What strategies worked best in helping your student through this stage? How might you use them again in the future?

Next Steps:

- Continue checking in regularly with your student.
- Look for opportunities to celebrate small wins together.
- Keep your Coping Toolbox updated as needs change.

For more tips, resources, and best practices, visit our [local support page](#) or [submit your question](#).



Thank you again for accepting a CIEE exchange student into your home. It's because of families like yours that students around the world can experience a life-changing journey. These students learn to become global citizens, encouraging ongoing cultural exchange in the future.