



## Cultural Adjustment

### Adjusting Through the U-Curve

40 minutes

#### Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ describe the phases of cultural adjustment
- ✓ identify their current placement on the U-curve of cultural adjustment



#### Materials

- ☐ “U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment” poster  
([www.cal.org/co/domestic/toolkit/tools/U-Curve%20of%20Cultural%20Adjustment.pdf](http://www.cal.org/co/domestic/toolkit/tools/U-Curve%20of%20Cultural%20Adjustment.pdf))
- ☐ “U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment Worksheet” (included), 1 per participant
- ☐ Writing implements, 1 per participant



#### Key English Vocabulary

miss	adjust
support	culture shock
phases	

#### Pre-Session Preparation

Hang the “U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment” poster in front of the training space.

#### Facilitator’s Introduction of Session to Participants

You have learned about cultural adjustment before. Since you are continuously adjusting, we will continue talking about the phases of cultural adjustment.

#### Introductory Exercise

Briefly review the Key English Vocabulary for this plan. Highlight the words as they come up throughout the session. *[If 8-10 minutes can be added, utilize the Teaching English Vocabulary section found at the end of this activity plan to enhance participant understanding of the key vocabulary words.]*

#### Activity

Ask participants to raise their hands if they have seen a U-curve of cultural adjustment before. Explain that the U-curve of cultural adjustment is a common chart showing the phases of cultural adjustment. Point out the four phases of cultural adjustment on the poster: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, and mastery.

Divide participants into 4 groups. Distribute worksheets to participants. Assign each group a phase of cultural adjustment. In groups, participants discuss what the phase is about and what happens in that phase based on the pictures.

Bring the full group together. In order of the phases (honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, mastery), small groups share their assigned phase of cultural adjustment.

Distribute writing implements. On their individual worksheets, participants mark the day's date where they think they are on the U-curve of cultural adjustment. If they remember, participants can also mark other dates for past experiences along the U-curve of cultural adjustment.

Share tools and resources available in the area when participants are encountering culture shock or difficulties with cultural adjustment.

### *Debriefing Questions to Ask Participants*

- ☺ What phase of culture shock are you going through?
- ☺ If you or someone you know is going through culture shock or having difficulties adjusting, how long should the person wait before seeking help?
- ☺ If you are having trouble with cultural adjustment, where can you go for help and support?

### *Variations or Considerations*

Consider dividing participants by language group to discuss the phases of the U-curve.

When working with an individual or a small group, groups can discuss more than one phase of cultural adjustment, or the discussion can be conducted as a full group.

When working with a larger group, divide participants into more groups; ideally, there would be 4 groups, 8 groups, or 12 groups so the work can be divided and discussed evenly.



Teaching English Vocabulary

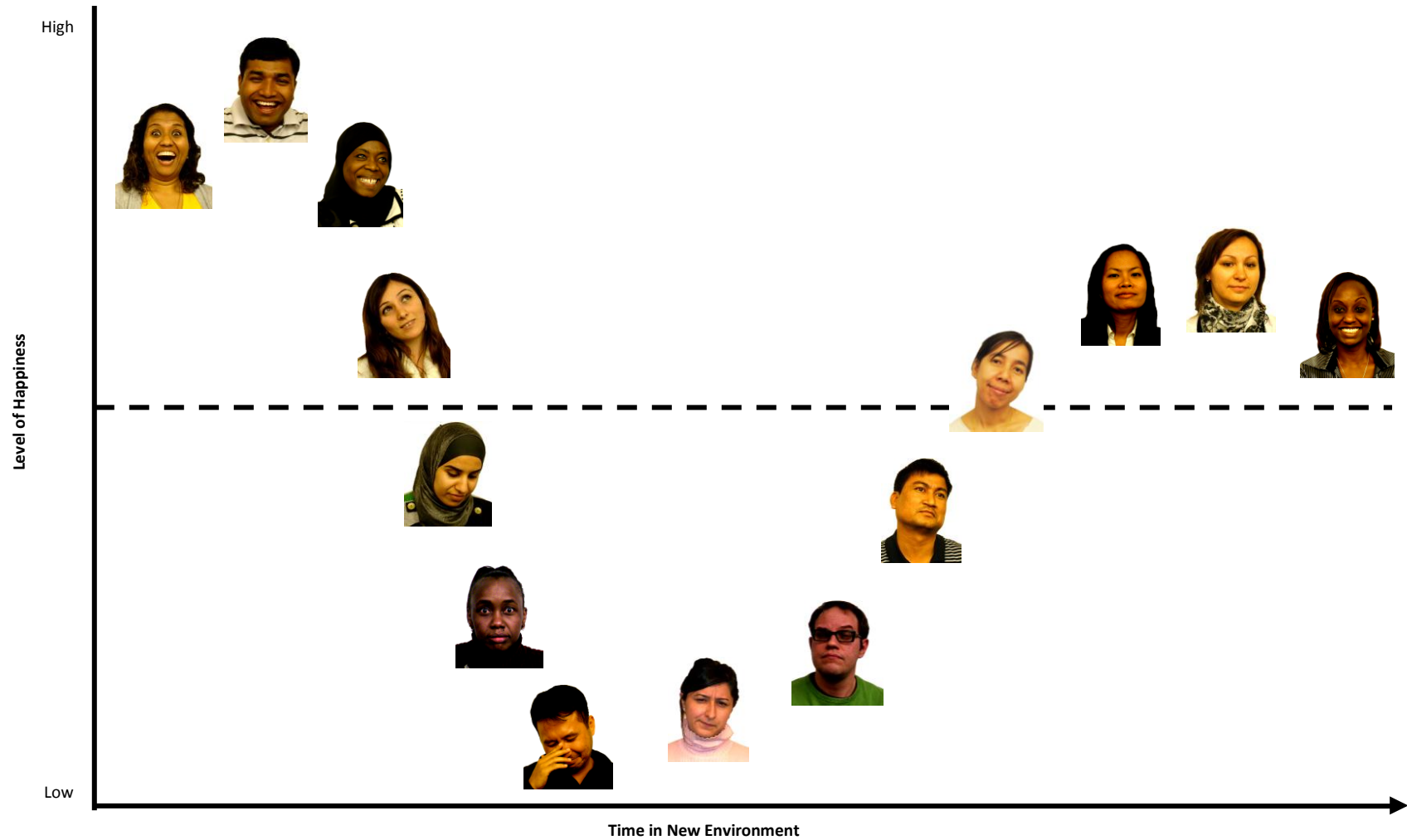
8-10 minutes

The following list begins with the words most easily understood and goes through more complex terms. Use the terms most accessible to your participants.

Introduce the words with the definition and contextual sentence. Omit words if participants already know them. Partner talks are meant to be a brief two minutes and do not have to include all the words. Encourage conversation and interaction, and focus on what participants already know about the word based on your introduction.

Vocabulary Term	Definition	Context	Partner Talk
miss	To <i>miss</i> is to feel sad or lonely without someone or something.	Sameul <i>misses</i> his cousins. Aida <i>misses</i> her favorite foods from Iraq.	Are there foods that you <i>miss</i> from your home country?
adjust	To <i>adjust</i> is to change in order to fit in or to get used to a situation. <i>Adjustments</i> are the changes.	Kyaw <i>adjusts</i> by writing his cousins emails and talking on the phone once a month. Blu makes an <i>adjustment</i> by learning how to make recipes with American ingredients.	How did you <i>adjust</i> to the United States?
support	To <i>support</i> is to help or assist when someone needs help.	Leila <i>supports</i> her father by leaving his dinner out when he comes home late from work.	How do you <i>support</i> your family?
culture shock	<i>Culture shock</i> is the stress or confusion someone feels when they meet people from a different culture or move to a different culture.	Purna has <i>culture shock</i> when he goes to an American mall. Rajen calls his mother when he feels <i>culture shock</i> ; she makes him feel better.	When do you feel <i>culture shock</i> ?
phases	<i>Phases</i> are periods of time in a process or cycle of development.	The moon has different <i>phases</i> every month. Each person goes through <i>phases</i> of cultural adjustment at different times.	Describe the phases of the moon to a partner.

# U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment Worksheet





## Cultural Adjustment

### Balancing Cultures and Values

30 minutes

#### Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ identify aspects of U.S. culture they would like to adopt
- ✓ identify aspects of their home culture they would like to maintain
- ✓ discuss finding a balance between their home culture and U.S. culture



#### Materials

- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ “Values Statements” (included)
- ☐ A second trainer, interpreter, or participant volunteer



#### Key English Vocabulary

culture	opinion
beliefs	values
balance	punishment

#### Pre-Session Preparation

Push all furniture to the walls of the training space, leaving an open space in the middle of the room for the session’s activities.

Put a line of masking tape down the center of the floor.

#### Facilitator’s Introduction of Session to Participants

It can be difficult to find a balance between your previous experiences and your experiences in the United States. Many immigrants find it difficult to decide what values and cultural aspects to adopt, which to maintain, and ways to find a balance between the two.

#### Introductory Exercise

Briefly review the Key English Vocabulary for this plan. Highlight the words as they come up throughout the session. *[If 8-10 minutes can be added, utilize the Teaching English Vocabulary section found at the end of this activity plan to enhance participant understanding of the key vocabulary words.]*

#### Activity

Invite participants to stand on either side of the line on the floor.

Tell participants that two statements will be read with pictures to demonstrate the meaning of the words. Participants must decide which statement they most agree with, and stand on the side of the line where that statement is being held.

The trainer and volunteer stand on opposite sides of the line with “Values Statements” for individual sides (Side A and Side B) in order (1 through 10). Statement 1 is read for both sides. Participants decide which statement they most agree with and move to that side.

Continue with statements 2 through 10.

### *Debriefing Questions to Ask Participants*

- ☺ What did you notice?
- ☺ Which side did you spend more time on?
- ☺ How would you describe the difference between the two sides?
- ☺ Do you feel you have found a balance between your home culture and U.S. culture?
- ☺ Would you like to create more of a balance, or are you happy with your adjustment thus far?

### *Variations or Considerations*

This activity plan can easily be conducted with any size group of participants, from an individual to a very large group.

Come up with your own or additional statements based on the needs of refugees in your community.



8-10 minutes

The following list begins with the words most easily understood and goes through more complex terms. Use the terms most accessible to your participants.

Introduce the words with the definition and contextual sentence. Omit words if participants already know them. Partner talks are meant to be a brief two minutes and do not have to include all the words. Encourage conversation and interaction, and focus on what participants already know about the word based on your introduction.

<i>Vocabulary Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Partner Talk</i>
culture	<i>Culture</i> is the ideas and practices of a particular group of people.	American <i>culture</i> has differences from Chinese <i>culture</i> .	What do you know about American <i>culture</i> ?
opinion	An <i>opinion</i> is what a person thinks about a person or an idea. It is not a fact.	Moo Moo's <i>opinion</i> is that her daughter should speak Karen at home.	Use these words to start a sentence: In my <i>opinion</i> ...
beliefs	<i>Beliefs</i> are strong opinions.	Every person has different <i>beliefs</i> about raising children.	What are your strongest <i>beliefs</i> ?
values	<i>Values</i> are beliefs about what is right or wrong or most important in life.	Americans feel working hard is an important <i>value</i> .	What are some <i>values</i> in your home culture?
balance	A <i>balance</i> is a way of keeping things equal even if they are different.	Leela tries to have a <i>balance</i> between her work life and her family life.	How can you balance work life and family life?
punishment	<i>Punishment</i> is making someone experience something painful or bad if they do something wrong.	Jul gives his son a <i>punishment</i> for coming home late. His son cannot watch TV for one month.	Do you remember a time when you got a <i>punishment</i> as a child?

Values Statements

Side A: Statement 1



Children should live on their own when they reach a certain age

Side B: Statement 1



Children should live at home until they are married



Side A: Statement 2



Corporal punishment should not be permitted

Side B: Statement 2



Corporal punishment should be legal and used when necessary

Side A: Statement 3



All members of the family should be consulted before making decisions

Side B: Statement 3



The man of the house should make decisions for the family

Side A: Statement 4



Children should speak their mind

Side B: Statement 4



Children should never question their parents or teachers

Side A: Statement 5



When you see someone you know on the street, you prefer to just nod

Side B: Statement 5



When you see someone on the street, you should greet them and ask how their day is going

Side A: Statement 6



You can find things in common with people from many different backgrounds

Side B: Statement 6



It is very difficult to find things in common with someone who looks different than you, or practices a different religion than you

Side A: Statement 7



It is important to take any job you are offered, and try to work your way up from there

Side B: Statement 7



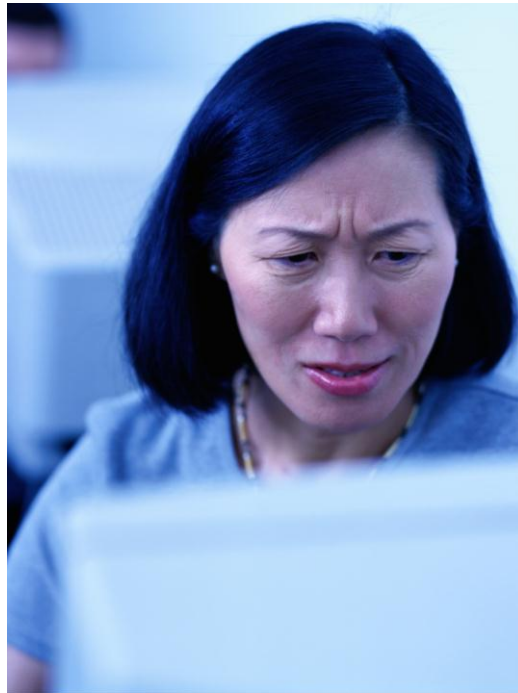
It is important to wait to find a job in your field

Side A: Statement 8



Anyone can learn new things, no matter how old they are

Side B: Statement 8



School is for children to learn; it is very difficult for adults to learn new things

Side A: Statement 9



Learning English takes time but is very important

Side B: Statement 9



I will speak only my own language; it is too difficult to learn English



Side A: Statement 10



It is important to be on time for meetings and appointments

Side B: Statement 10



Sometimes I have other things to do and cannot be on time



## Cultural Adjustment

### Communicating With Diverse Populations

20 minutes

#### Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ practice interacting with people with differing characteristics
- ✓ describe some of the diversity in their community



#### Materials

- ☐ Flipchart or board
- ☐ Writing implements for flipchart or board



#### Key English Vocabulary

communication	diverse
diversity	conversation
similarity	

#### Note to Trainer

This is a short session and could easily serve as the introductory piece to a larger topic within cultural adjustment or learning English.

#### Pre-Session Preparation

Assign participants to go into their community and engage in two brief conversations in English with two different, diverse people: a man and a woman, people of different races or ethnicities, people with different religious beliefs, etc. Participants may choose a shop clerk, librarian, case manager, a neighbor, and so forth. Encourage participants to talk to people that are different from each other. Participants take note of the differences in the two conversations.

#### Introductory Exercise

Briefly review the Key English Vocabulary for this plan. Highlight the words as they come up throughout the session. *[If 8-10 minutes can be added, utilize the Teaching English Vocabulary section found at the end of this activity plan to enhance participant understanding of the key vocabulary words.]*

#### Activity

Conduct a “pair-and-share” exercise by putting participants into pairs. With their partner, participants describe their interactions, who they talked with, and how the conversations went. Participants also share any differences they noticed in the two conversations and discuss these differences with their partner.

Bring the full group together and ask for highlights from their conversations. Record notes on a flipchart or board that have to do with communicating with diverse people. Lead the group in a discussion and debrief of communicating with diverse populations by using the questions below.

*Debriefing Questions to Ask Participants*

- ☺ What differences did you notice between the two conversations?
- ☺ What similarities did you notice?
- ☺ Were you more comfortable during one conversation or the other? If so, why?
- ☺ What diversity do you see in your community?
- ☺ What can we say about communicating with diverse people in our communities?

*Variations or Considerations*

When working with an individual or a small group, continue with the “Pre-Session Preparation” activity as described. Discuss the conversations as a full group.



8-10 minutes

The following list begins with the words most easily understood and goes through more complex terms. Use the terms most accessible to your participants.

Introduce the words with the definition and contextual sentence. Omit words if participants already know them. Partner talks are meant to be a brief two minutes and do not have to include all the words. Encourage conversation and interaction, and focus on what participants already know about the word based on your introduction.

<i>Vocabulary Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Partner Talk</i>
communication	<i>Communication</i> is sharing messages, information, or ideas.	Tira <i>communicates</i> with her brother in Syria every day. They <i>communicate</i> by phone or by text message.	How do you <i>communicate</i> with your family?
diverse	<i>Diverse</i> means having different kinds or sorts.	There are a <i>diverse</i> group of students in class. They come from different countries, speak different languages, and like different subjects.	What are the different ways that people can be <i>diverse</i> from each other?
diversity	<i>Diversity</i> is being diverse.	The United States is a country with a lot of <i>diversity</i> . Asu likes working at a place with a lot of <i>diversity</i> , because he meets a lot of people who are different from him.	What <i>diversity</i> did you see in your home country or country of asylum?
conversation	A <i>conversation</i> is a talk that two or more people have.	Isabel has a <i>conversation</i> with her doctor.	Do you have <i>conversations</i> with your American neighbors?
similarity	A <i>similarity</i> is a way of being the same. Opposite: difference.	There are many <i>similarities</i> between lions and tigers.	What are the similarities between your home country and the United States?



## Cultural Adjustment

### Changes Within the Family

40 minutes

#### Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ discuss how family roles and responsibilities may change
- ✓ consider ways to handle these changes in a healthy manner



#### Materials

- ☐ “Family Situations” (included)
- ☐ Flipchart or board
- ☐ Writing implements for flipchart or board



#### Key English Vocabulary

relationship	stress
challenge	healthy reaction
uncomfortable	situation

#### Introductory Exercise

Briefly review the Key English Vocabulary for this plan. Highlight the words as they come up throughout the session. *[If 8-10 minutes can be added, utilize the Teaching English Vocabulary section found at the end of this activity plan to enhance participant understanding of the key vocabulary words.]*

Conduct a “think-pair-share” exercise by asking participants to think about a challenging situation that has occurred within their family or within the family of someone they know, and how the family handled the challenge. Participants then share their thoughts with a partner.

Bring the full group together and ask for highlights from the exercise. Record the ways people handled family challenges on flipchart or the board.

#### Activity

Divide participants into groups of 3-4 people. Each group chooses a spokesperson. Distribute one “Family Situations” to each group. Groups read the “Family Situations,” discuss what happened, and address the questions.

Bring the full group together. Spokespeople from each group share highlights from their group discussions. After one spokesperson is done, ask the full group for additional ways to handle the situation. Record ideas on flipchart or the board.

### *Debriefing Questions to Ask Participants*

- ☺ What stories are similar to situations you have heard about in the past?
- ☺ What are some ways to have a healthy reaction to some of the situations that you or your family might try?
- ☺ What is challenging about some of these situations?
- ☺ Why is family communication important when situations like this occur?

### *Variations or Considerations*

When working with a less literate group, read a “Family Situation” aloud for the full group. Small groups discuss what happened. Bring the full group together and ask follow-up questions provided with the situation. Continue with additional “Family Situations” as time permits.

When working with an individual or a small group, use fewer “Family Situations.” Discuss situations in small groups or as a full group.



8-10 minutes

The following list begins with the words most easily understood and goes through more complex terms. Use the terms most accessible to your participants.

Introduce the words with the definition and contextual sentence. Omit words if participants already know them. Partner talks are meant to be a brief two minutes and do not have to include all the words. Encourage conversation and interaction, and focus on what participants already know about the word based on your introduction.

<i>Vocabulary Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Partner Talk</i>
relationship	A <i>relationship</i> is the kind of connection between people.	Their <i>relationship</i> changed over time. First they were classmates. Then they were good friends. Now they are married!	What are the <i>relationships</i> in your life?
stress	<i>Stress</i> is a pressure or negative feeling.	Martine has a lot of <i>stress</i> at work so she calls her sister to feel better.	Who do you talk to when you feel <i>stress</i> ?
challenge	A <i>challenge</i> is a difficult problem.	There are many <i>challenges</i> of moving to a new country, such as learning a new language.	What <i>challenges</i> do you have in the United States?
healthy reaction	A <i>healthy reaction</i> is a good way of responding to something that happens. A healthy reaction makes you feel better about the situation.	Khine gets a bad grade on the test but he has a <i>healthy reaction</i> . He stays calm and goes to talk to the teacher.	What are some ways to have a <i>healthy reaction</i> to a challenge or stress?
uncomfortable	Feeling <i>uncomfortable</i> is when you are not relaxed in your mind or body. Opposite: <i>comfortable</i> .	Adad is <i>uncomfortable</i> telling his boss that he needs the day off.	Where do you feel <i>comfortable</i> speaking English? Where do you feel <i>uncomfortable</i> ?
situation	A <i>situation</i> is what is happening at a time and place.	Mehrdad loves his job. The <i>situation</i> at his work is very good.	Tell a partner about your housing <i>situation</i> .

## Family Situations

### Family Situation 1: Salima and Her Daughter

Salima and her family had been in the United States for almost a year. Salima was not learning English as quickly as her oldest daughter, who was in middle school. Salima wanted to stay involved in her children's education, so she made sure to attend parent-teacher conferences. Salima's daughter always interpreted for Salima and told her what good students her children were. One day, Salima saw her daughter's English teacher. The teacher told Salima that her daughter was failing a class.

*Discuss what happened in the situation using the questions below.*

- Describe the relationship between Salima and her daughter. What is the challenge here?
- What information might Salima be missing?
- What other options might Salima have?
- How can you have a healthy reaction to this situation?

### Family Situation 2: Kyale and His Wife

Kyale's wife found a full-time job soon after they arrived in the U.S. Kyale was nervous about his wife working, but he recognized that their family needed income and health benefits. A year later, Kyale was offered a part-time position stocking shelves at a local store. Kyale wanted his wife to stop working so he could support their family again. His wife pointed out that Kyale would not be making enough money at his part-time job, nor would he receive benefits. Kyale knew she was right, but he felt uncomfortable not being able to support their family.

*Discuss what happened in the situation using the questions below.*

- Describe the relationship between Kyale and his wife. What is the challenge here?
- Why does Kyale feel uncomfortable?
- How could Kyale and his wife work together so they are both more comfortable with the situation?
- How can you have a healthy reaction to this situation?



### Family Situation 3: Jeun and His Son

Jeun had been nervous about resettlement, because he wanted his children to understand their history and culture. But he also thought they would have more opportunities if they resettled. In the U.S., Jeun's children quickly adjusted to their new home. Over time, his children started speaking English most of the time. One day, Jeun asked his oldest son a question in their first language. Jeun's son responded in English. Jeun asked another question in their first language, and his son again responded in English. Jeun asked his son why he was not speaking their first language; his son said, "We are in American now, and we speak English in America."

*Discuss what happened in the situation using the questions below.*

- Describe the relationship between Jeun and his son. What is the challenge here?
- How do you think Jeun feels?
- What do you think Jeun should do?
- How can you have a healthy reaction to this situation?

### Family Situation 4: Prakash and His Daughter

Prakash resettled in the U.S. with his parents, wife, and three children. He wanted his children to find a healthy balance between life in the U.S. and their home culture. Prakash was very happy that his children continued to spend time at home, especially with their grandparents. One day, Prakash's 15-year-old daughter walked into the kitchen in a very short skirt. Prakash asked what she was doing, since it was almost time to leave for school. His daughter said she was dressed and ready for school.

*Discuss what happened in the situation using the questions below.*

- Describe the relationship between Prakash and his daughter. What is the challenge here?
- How do you think Prakash feels?
- How can you have a healthy reaction to this situation?

### Family Situation 5: Lipia and Her Children

Lipia was a single mother of five school-aged children between 7 and 15 years of age. She was happy to find a job that allowed her to have breakfast with her children, but did not arrive home until dinnertime. Lipia woke up early to make breakfast and lunches to take to school in the morning. She arrived home in the evening to start cooking, and her family would eat a late dinner. Lipia felt very fortunate to be able to spend this time with her family, but she was having trouble finding time to clean the house, do laundry, help her children with their homework, and other household chores.

*Discuss what happened in the situation using the questions below.*

- Describe the relationship between Lipia and her children. What is the challenge here?
- How do you think Lipia feels?
- What could Lipia do to ease her stress and ensure household chores are done?
- How can you have a healthy reaction to this situation?

### Family Situation 6: Amina and Her Son

Amina was pleased that her 16-year-old son was doing well in school, learning English, and staying involved with their family. His teachers spoke highly of him, and he seemed genuinely happy. However, Amina's son would often be out very late on weekend nights with friends, and rarely brought them to their house so she could meet them. The few she had met were not polite and rarely even greeted her when they came over.

*Discuss what happened in the situation using the questions below.*

- Describe the relationship between Amina and her son. What is the challenge here?
- How do you think Amina feels?
- How can you have a healthy reaction to this situation?