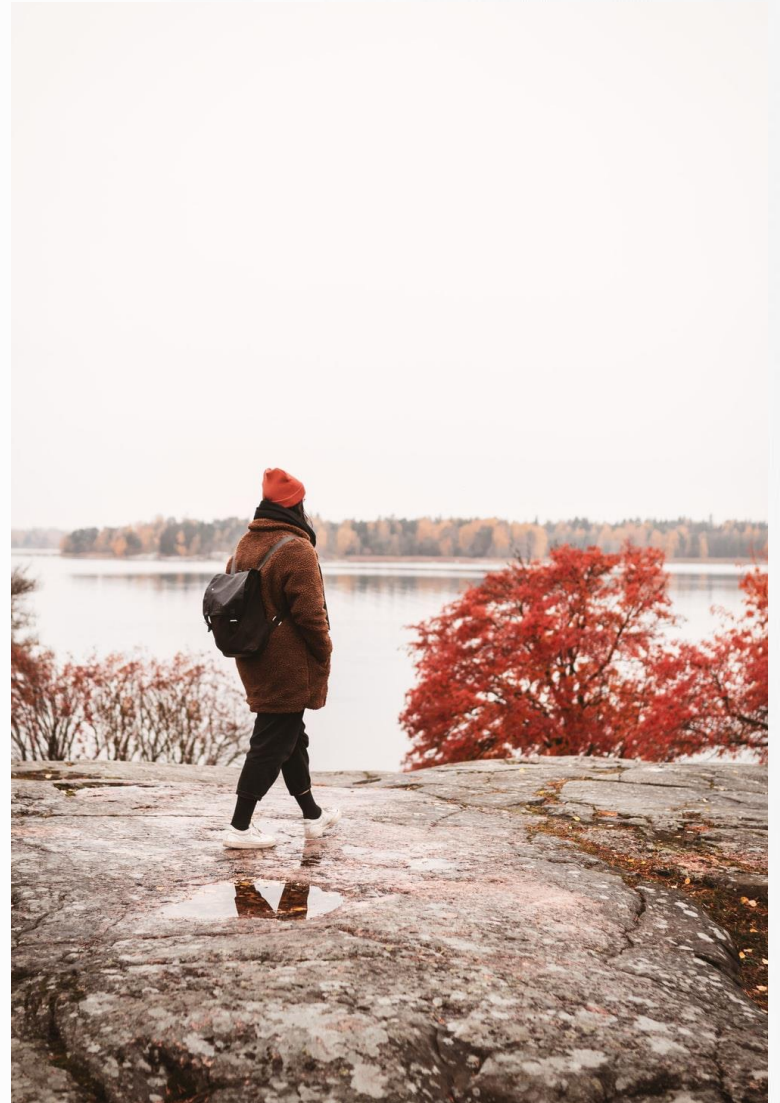
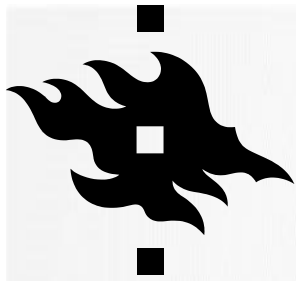


# NEW TO THE NORTH?

*Common experiences when studying  
abroad and facilitating adjustment to a  
new place and culture*

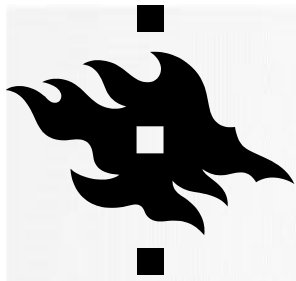
Study Psychologists  
Fanny Hedenborg & Susanne Tiihonen





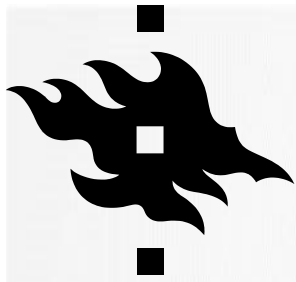
# EXPERIENCES SO FAR?

- *What are your first impressions of studying and living in Helsinki?*
- *Is this your first time studying or living abroad?*



# EXPECTATIONS?

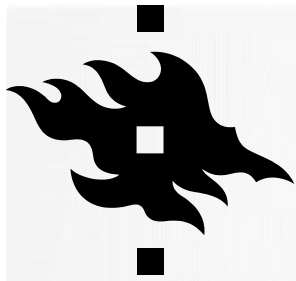
- *What are your expectations of your studies in Finland?*
- *How do you think studying in Finland might be different?*



# TODAY'S TOPICS

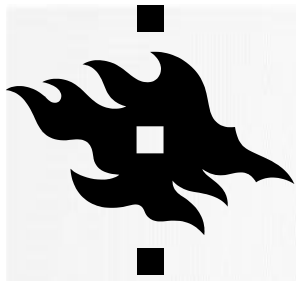


- Common experiences when studying abroad: culture shock and the process of adjustment
- How to facilitate adjustment
- How to promote wellbeing and strengthen coping-strategies



# WHAT IS CULTURE SHOCK?

- The **challenges** related to experiencing a new context
  - Loss of familiarity, loss of connection
  - Unclear & insecurity in the new context
- For example when: moving abroad, encountering new sub-cultures, re-organization at work
- A **100% normal experience**



# THE PHASES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

## 1. The **honeymoon** phase

Interest, excitement, idealization, positive interpretations

## 2. The **frustrating shock** phase

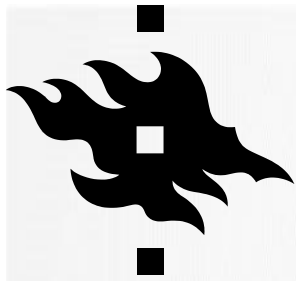
Irritation, disappointment, frustration, impatience, tension, helplessness, confusion, lack of motivation, negative interpretations, external attributions

## 3. The **adjustment** and **reorientation** phase

Positive attitude to facing challenges in the new culture, more realistic appreciation, developing problem-solving skills, humor and relaxation

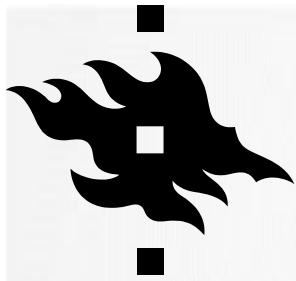
## 4. The **acculturation** and **mastery** phase

Mastery in dealing with the new culture, feeling accepted, integration and change



# WHAT'S BEHIND CULTURE SHOCK?

- **Normal stress reactions**
  - Evolutionary cause for stress (insecurity & unclarity)
- **Information overload**
  - Even small things are new and require learning and effort
- **Value conflicts**
- **Identity crisis**
  - Loss of connections and intimacy
  - Loss of familiar roles and contexts

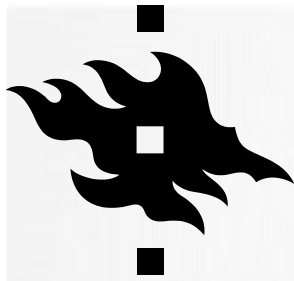


# ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

Adjusting to an unfamiliar educational system

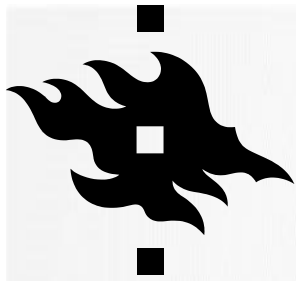
- reality might differ from expectations, first experiences matter
- registering to classes
- changing plans
- language barriers
- unfamiliar methods of evaluation
- understanding implicit customs and norms





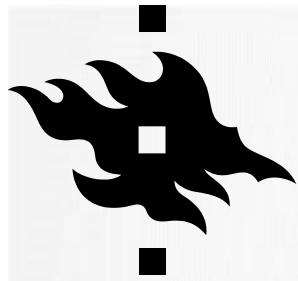
# TAKE A MOMENT TO CONSIDER

*Identify an experience of cultural shock that you've had, write it down and place it on the Flinga wall, in the phase where you think it belongs*



# DISCUSSION

*Write down ideas for caring for oneself when studying in a new country and facing a new academic environment – place these on the ideas-section on Flinga*



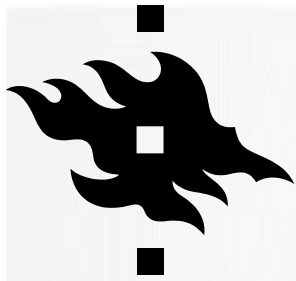
# WELLBEING AND OUR BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

Autonomy

Competence

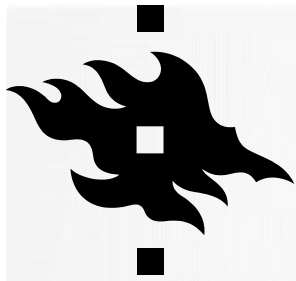
Connectedness

*Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan)*



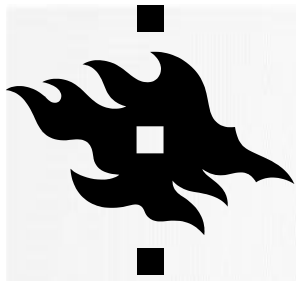
# SUPPORTING WELLBEING AND FACILITATING ADJUSTMENT

- Stick to your daily routines and take care of your basic needs (sleep, nutrition, exercise....)
- Focus on what you can control
- Remember self-compassion
- Stay in touch with family and friends
  
- **Awareness** of culture shock helps
- Cultivate **realistic expectations, openness** and **curiosity** about the culture, and your own experiences
- Practice **acceptance of personal change** and change in general



# RELY ON SOCIAL SUPPORT WHEN STUDYING

- Share your ideas on helpful study-routines and enjoyable leisure activities with others! Also, share your possible worries and concerns with your study mates
- Study together regularly ("study buddy") – utilize eg. the pomodoro method!
- Create positive/mild social pressure by telling someone what you are working on
- Study at the university/library
- Participate in events organized by the Guidance Corner:  
(<https://studies.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/guidance-corner>)



# LINKS WITH FURTHER SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

## **Material for studies**

[Support for studies](#) (HU study psychologist)

[Supporting your studies-guide](#) (Oulu University study psychologists)

## **Nyhti ry & learning life-skills**

- [Wellbeing-skills](#) (PDF-file)
- [Listen to your emotions](#)
- [Social skills](#)
- [Sleep](#)
- [Stress](#)

## **Material for mental wellbeing**

[Student wellbeing services](#) (instructions for students)

Mental Health Finland - [crisis helpline](#) in English



**THANK YOU!**  
**QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? :)**

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