Cultural Adjustment
I love UC Berkeley! I'm learning new things. Online learning is convenient and flexible!

My study group meets at an inconvenient time, and they are always talking about TV shows I have never seen. What was I thinking? What am I doing at UC Berkeley? I don't belong at this school.

I am starting to feel more confident in my classes, and have found a schedule that works for me. Things are pretty good here after all!

My family is encouraging me to major in Chemistry, but my career counselor says I should "explore" my interests. What should I do?

I've finally adjusted and understand who I am and how I fit into this environment. I feel balanced and happy.
This will be an *exciting* and *challenging time*

“*Honeymoon Phase*” – *initial excitement & newness*

- Exploring a new learning environment – US & Berkeley culture
- Increased sense of independence
- Feeling of accomplishment
- General feelings of enthusiasm and positivity
This will be an exciting and challenging time

Initial Culture Shock

- Newness and excitement fades as everyday reality sets in
- Psychological stressors/emotional challenges
- Dealing with remote learning environment: Zoom fatigue, isolation, time zone differences
- Likely to coincide with busier academic period
- When you communicate, your student may be upset, negative and/or vulnerable
Psychological Stressors: Common Concerns of International Students

- Isolation
- Adjusting to differences in the educational system
- Not being understood when they express themselves in their usual ways
- Difficulty making friends or engaging in campus community
- Dealing with misperceptions about their culture or country
Psychological Stressors: Imposter Syndrome

- I’m an imposter – a fake.
- I’m not as smart or talented as others think.
- I don’t deserve to be here; I just got lucky.
- I need to prove myself to others.
- Everyone will realize I’m weak if I ask for help.
Re-entry Cultural Transition
THE CULTURAL ICEBERG

SURFACE CULTURE

DEEP CULTURE

Communications Styles and Rules:
- Facial Expressions
- Gestures
- Eye Contact
- Personal Space
- Touching
- Body Language
- Conversational Patterns in Different Social Situations
- Handling and Displaying of Emotion
- Tone of Voice

Concepts of:
- Self: Time, Past and Future
- Honors and Justice
- Roles related to Age, Sex, Class, Family, etc.

Notions of:
- Courtesy and Manners
- Friendship
- Leadership
- Mores
- Beauty

Attitudes toward:
- Elders
- Adolescents
- Dependents
- Rule:
  - Expectations
  - Work
  - Authority
- Cooperation vs. Competition
- Relationships with Animals: Age, Sex, Death

Approaches to:
- Religion
- Courtship
- Marriage
- Raising Children
- Decision-Making
- Problem Solving
# Student Coping Strategies

## Things I can do on my own
- Keep a journal
- Exercise
- Talk with friends/family about your stress

## Things I can do with others
- Join a club
- Participate in virtual campus events/programs to engage with the community

## Things I can remind myself
- "This is normal"
- “You can do this”
- “This is only temporary”
Is your student studying remotely? How can you support them?

- Listen and communicate
- Make space for online learning — create a calm and quiet environment
- Keep a routine
- Make yourself available
- Help find time for fun and active breaks
International Parent & Family Calendar

Important dates and advice
Congratulations to you and your student for reaching this important milestone! Now that you are part of the UC Berkeley family, Berkeley International Office (BIO) would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and offer a basic overview of your student’s first year experience.

This calendar includes suggestions on how to offer support while your adult student learns even more about independence, responsibility, challenges, and successes. We understand that every family and student relationship is different. However, we hope that you will find these tips useful, and that you will refer to the calendar for important dates.
Letting Go

College is a time of change and transition for both you and your student. Your student may deal with these changes through mood swings and ambivalence. Being prepared for these changes can sometimes ease the process; the sudden shift from being involved in your student’s plans to not being a part of their everyday lives may be jarring and cause a feeling of loss or helplessness. It can be both a liberating and unwelcome change.

Tips to help you cope with the loss of control as your student leaves for college:

- You will always have a parent-child relationship, but try to build an adult one as well. Keep in touch through phone calls, small video calls, letters, and care packages. Most students are excited to receive mail. Let the student have some control in these interactions to allow them a sense of independence.
- Congratulate yourself in keeping them, yet set free. Recognize that the foundation you built for your student over the years will accompany and support them through their college life and years.
- Remember your student, that you believe in their abilities, and that they will be fine in their own college. Allow your student to make their own mistakes. Take pride in their confidence and successes. Help them view so-called “failures” as opportunities to learn and to increase confidence.
- Don’t draw out goodbyes; remember that you will see them again before long.
- Focus on the things you enjoyed doing before your student began college. Some parents fill their schedule with new commitments solely to occupy themselves. It’s probably best to do things you wanted to do, may not have had time for earlier. Focus on yourself or other family members.
- Try not to feel guilty if you adjust to your student being in college. Learning to adjust to your student’s new life is an adjustment process for everyone. Be honest with your child on the quality of life you have for your student. Finding your own healthy balance helps you from being overly emotional. If you are unable every time you talk to your student, be honest or feel guilty or sad and, in some cases, may avoid talking to you.

Letting Go (cont.)

More tips to help you cope with the loss of control as your student leaves for college:

- Limit any other major changes in your life for a while until you can feel stable and adjusted.
- If you have other children at home, try to avoid asking the college student to set an example because this may make them feel defeated.
- Students sometimes seem to be different after some time in college. Try not to judge the quality of these changes—however permanent or impermanent. Let your student enjoy the widening of their world view and altering of thoughts since that is an essential part of the College experience.
- Talk to other parents to validate your feelings and get emotional support.

Ideas for getting the most out of your conversations and communications:

- Make a list of items you want to discuss when your student calls. You can cover any important topics and then move on to lighter topics without feeling worried that you forgot something.
- Begin your calls with positive news. Share news about yourself and life at home, but don’t nag your student; an inexact is too about their life as well.
- Let your student determine the length of your talk. He or she may need to study or go to class. Alternatively, schedule a time to speak in advance.
- Don’t ask questions you don’t feel ready to hear the answer to. If you respond in a judgmental fashion when your student confides in you, it could limit the information they share in the future.
Nervousness about making new friends
Encourage your student to get involved in an activity or organization that interests them. Berkeley International Office’s orientation and social events are a great way to make connections!

Anxiety about major/career path
The College of Letters and Science advises that the first year may be used for exploring majors and fulfilling university requirements. It is not unusual for students to be uncertain of their major at this point. Students may also contact academic advisers and the Career Center for additional guidance.

Roommate conflicts
Propose that your student discuss responsibilities and house rules with roommate(s). Students living in dorms may reach out to their Resident Advisers (RA) for advice.

Adapting to U.S. culture
Encourage your student to be open to trying new things. Berkeley International Office can be a great resource.
Financial Stress
Encourage your student to look for on-campus jobs. This is a great time to discuss budgeting and to reflect on expenditure thus far to encourage responsible money habits. A great on-campus budgeting resource is Bears for Financial Success.

Academic Stress
Remind your student gently about studying proactively, but note that if they do poorly in one class this won’t have a huge impact on their average GPA. Encourage visits to office hours and formation of study groups. Again, the Student Learning Center is a great resource!

Winter Break planning
Encourage your student to start planning their trip early or to plan events during the vacation if they are staying in Berkeley. They can also check out events/activities planned by Berkeley International Office.
Uncertainty about major, fall course load, or career path

Most students decide on (a) tentative major(s) by sophomore year. The Berkeley Academic Guide is a useful tool. Suggest that your student consider shadowing someone in their ideal job. Encourage seeking out advice from advisers, counselors, or upperclassmen.

Summer plans

Discuss options and what is best for your student and family: take classes, study abroad, do an internship, or take a break?

Taxes

Remind students to visit the Berkeley International Office tax webpages for general guidelines about filing taxes, regardless of income.

Visa/work authorization

If your student plans to work off-campus during the summer, remind them to visit BIO for advising. Remind your student to consult the BIO website to plan ahead for international travel.

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Cal Parents: calparents.berkeley.edu/

BIO Parents & Families webpage: internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/parents-of-students
Q&A Session

- First year experience
- Safety, Health & Wellness
- Academics
- Internships & on-campus jobs
- Housing
- Extra-curricular activities & free time
- Your questions!
Helpful Resources

Visiting Berkeley:
• Clean and safe lodging: https://calodging.com/clean-safe-certified-members
• Visit Berkeley Guide: https://www.visitberkeley.com/plan-your-trip/visitor-guide-request/

Campus Resources:
• Cal Parents: https://calparents.berkeley.edu/
• Move-in information: https://housing.berkeley.edu/move-in
• Inviting family to the US: https://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/families/inviting-family-us
Thank you for attending the International Parent & Family Orientation!

Please stay for a virtual tour of the campus!