



How to Make the Most of Your Stay?

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Your Aims?

- What are your aims for your stay in Kuopio?
- Do you have to have aims?
- How can you achieve your goals?
- Are you able to adjust your actions and thinking?



Your First Impressions?

- What are your first impressions of life and people in Finland?
- What have you noticed so far?

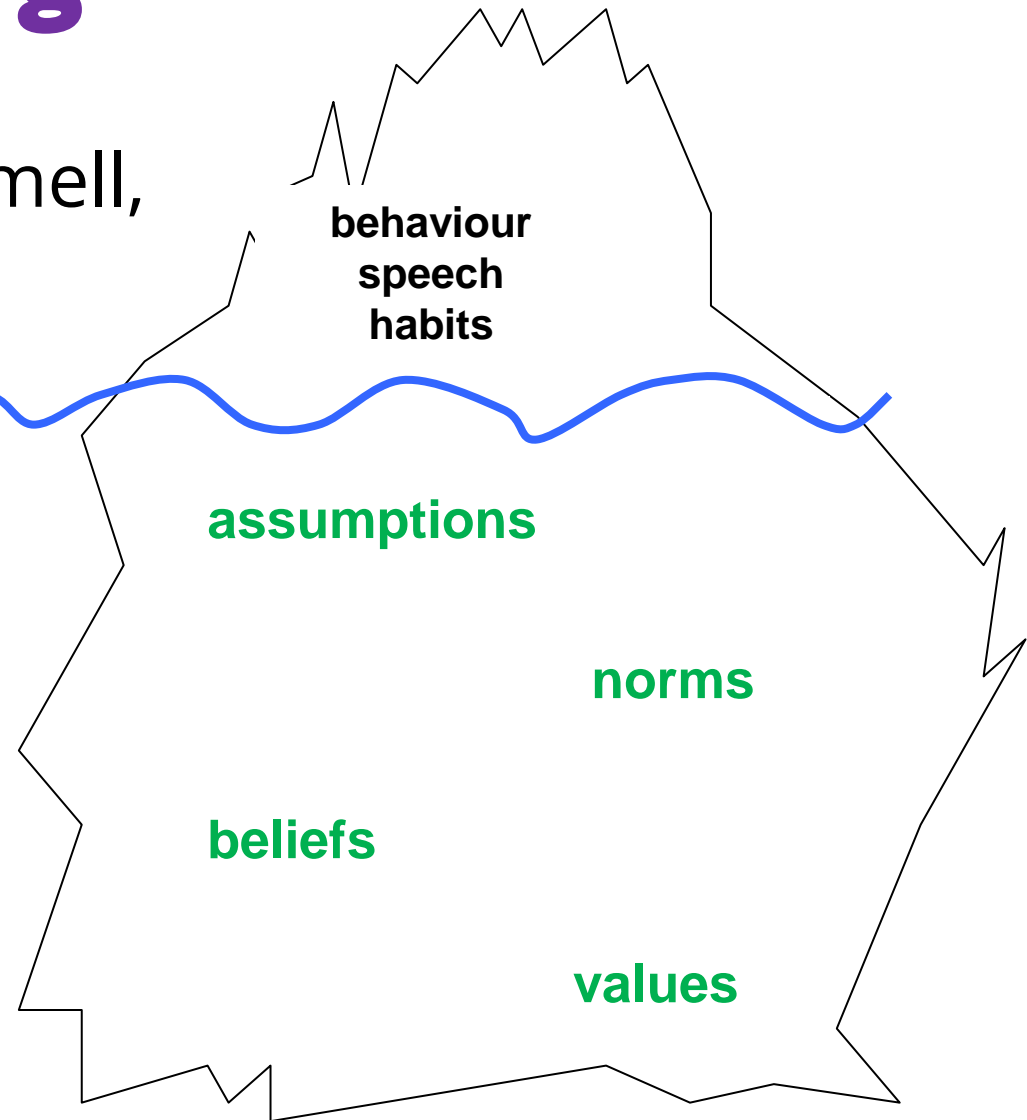


What Do We Mean by Culture?

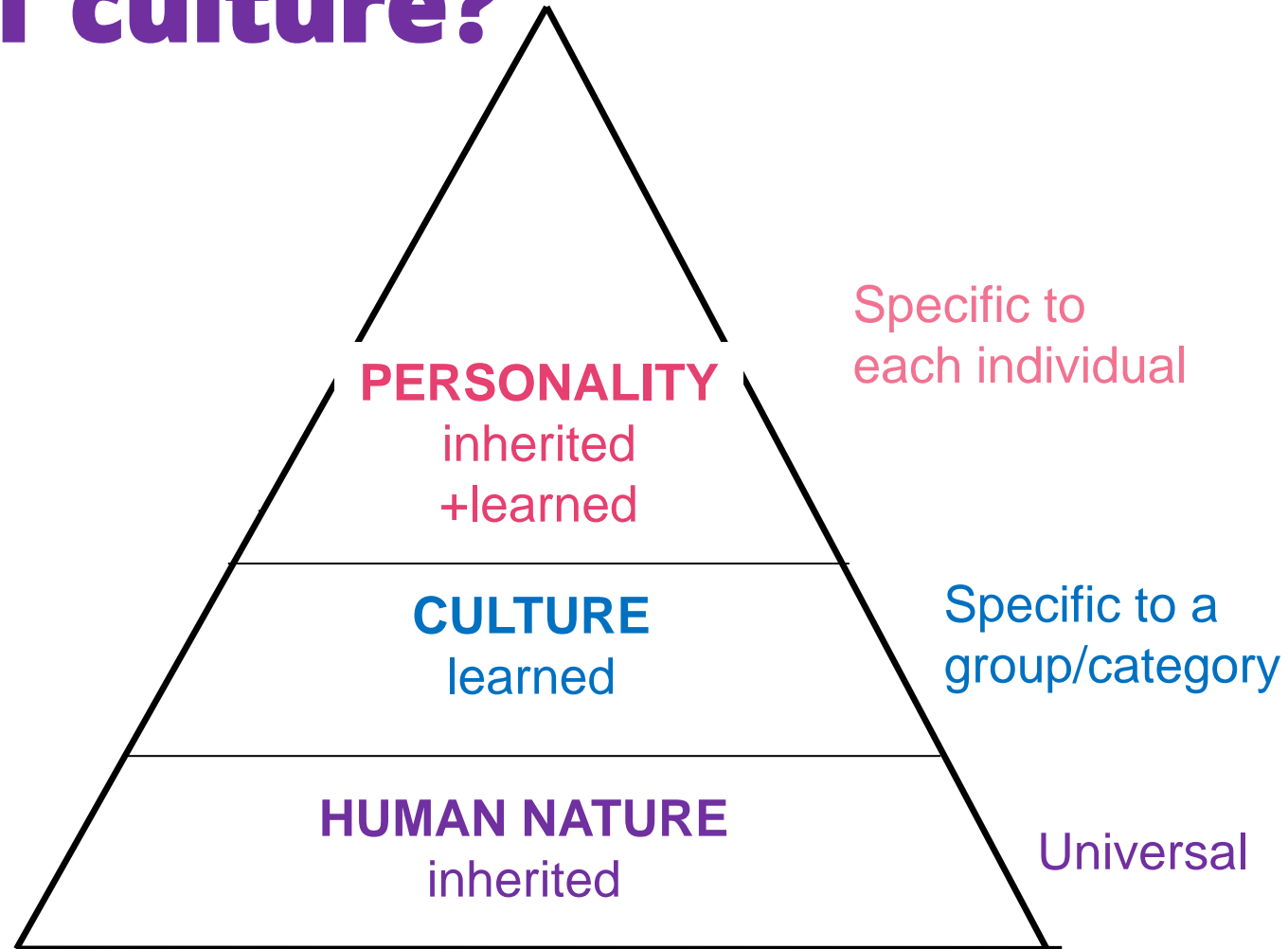
Culture As an Iceberg

Things that you can see, hear, smell,
taste, touch

Things which are more difficult
to observe or notice



What is NOT culture?



Culture is ...

- communication (Edward T. Hall).
- the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings (Ruth & John Useem).
- the collective programming of the mind (Geert Hofstede).
- the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas (Edgar Schein).
- how things are done here (John Mole).
- a kind of storehouse or library of possible meanings and symbols (Ron Scollon).

Culture is ...

- A broad and multifaceted concept that encompasses **the beliefs, customs, practices and social behaviours of a particular group or society**. It includes language, traditions and customs, arts and literature, values and norms, social institutions, food and cuisine, fashion and clothing.
Culture shapes how people see the world and interact with each other. It is dynamic and can evolve over time as societies change and interact with each other. (Copilot, UEF, 3 Jan 2025)
- All communication is more or less cross-cultural (Deborah Tannen).

What can be challenging in intercultural context?

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Intercultural Challenges

- Ethnocentrism
 - “I am normal, you are odd, he/she is crazy!”
- Stereotypes
 - How to avoid stereotyping people? Can we generalise at all?
- How to recognise cultural differences?
- And similarities?
- Perception risks?
 - selective perception: We see things we expect to see. We often ignore things challenging our understanding.
 - quick interpretation: We jump into conclusions without noticing it.
 - interpretation of others' behaviour in terms of our own culture



Examining Cultural Differences

(Geert Hofstede's dimensions)

Some cultures are more
collectivistic...



some are more
individualistic...

Examining Cultural Differences

(Geert Hofstede's dimensions)

High / low power distance

This is about how the distribution of power is shown in society

- High power distance
 - more hierarchical
 - differences of power are openly demonstrated
- Low power distance
 - more democratic
 - inappropriate to demonstrate power differences

Finnish culture is regarded as 1) individualistic 2) low power distance

Where does our own culture stand on these two issues?



Finnish Values and Characteristics?

infoFinland.fi: [Finnish customs](#)



■ Independence

- national independence: Finland's Independence Day 6 Dec is a public holiday.
- personal independence: children at the age of 7 can stay alone at home, young people move out from their childhood homes early
- financial independence: society offers financial support for example for unemployed, for students, for parents
- in studies: a lot of independent studying, contact teaching is only a small part



Finnish Values and Characteristics?

infoFinland.fi: [Finnish customs](#)

- **Trust** https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-in-finland_52600c9e-en.html
 - Finnish society is based on trust.
 - trusting other people and authorities
 - working life: flexible working hours, working from home
 - **Honesty** is expected and valued.
 - How does trust show in your studies?





Finnish Values and Characteristics?

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■ Peace, Quiet, Silence, Personal Space

- Nature is important for Finns.
- 509 000 summer cottages in Finland (5.6 million people)
- An ideal summer cottage is by the lake in the middle of nature, the further away the neighbours are the better.





Finnish Values and Characteristics?

■ Communication Style?

- Direct way of communicating
 - Directly to the point (may seem rude)
 - Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Not making a number of yourself (modesty)
 - Finns don't use names too often.
- Leaving people alone, let them have their peace and quiet can be considered more polite than talking to them. Especially if you don't know the other.
 - Greeting people?
- Finns speak only if they have something to say?
- Silence can be relaxing and comfortable, not awkward.





Cultural Differences in Classroom

- How late is “late for class”?
- Can you disagree with your lecturer? Openly?
- What do lecturers expect from students?
- What is an essay?
- What are the exams like?
- Can you walk out of the exam if you don't like the questions?





Adaptation Process

- a learning process
- a personal process
 - expectations, personality (ways of reacting in a stressful situation), earlier experiences (first time?), cultural differences, length of stay, everyday life, friends ...
- an emotional process –enjoyable? disturbing? both?
 - change of environment (physical, social)
 - familiar things and people are missing/different
 - problems with communication





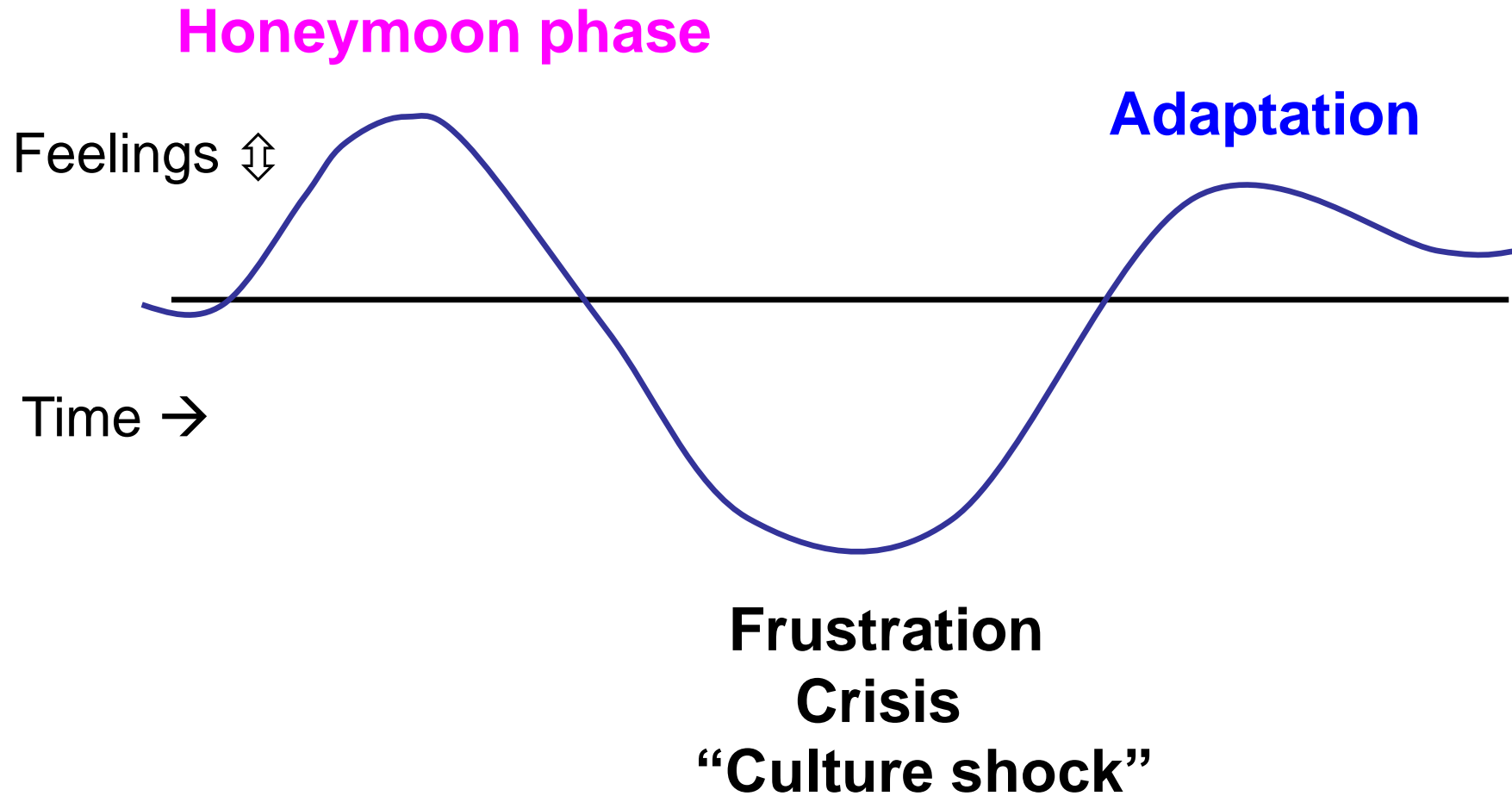
Adaptation Process

Possible reactions

- physical reactions
 - tiredness, problems with sleeping, body pains, rashes...
- mental reactions
 - euphoria, extreme enthusiasm
 - homesickness
 - feeling isolated or alone
 - uncertainty
 - hatred towards Finland and Finns



Adaption Process, U-curve





Some Practical Tips if It Gets Hard

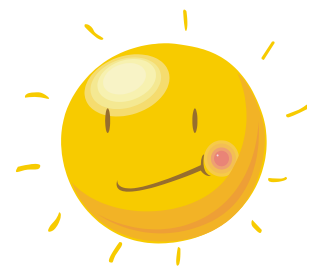
- Keep in mind: perfectly normal reaction and part of adaptation process – no stage lasts for ever!
- Your reactions show that you are adapting.
- The process is different for everybody.
- Give yourself time to adjust and don't push yourself too hard.
- Try to see it as a learning experience.
- Think what you have learned already, how much more you understand than you did.
- Sometimes you will understand something only after a long time...
- Remember your own “tried and tested” ways of reducing stress.
- If things are difficult, talk to someone!





Some Practical Tips if It Gets Hard

- Try to do the same things you normally do at home like sports, meeting friends, talking to your fellow students, writing a diary ...
- Or start a new hobby ...
- ESN KISA and Student Union activities (different clubs, movie nights, parties, meetings, trips)
- Outdoor activities (walking or skiing in forests, walking, skiing or skating on lakes)
- Other things to do in Kuopio
 - Kuopio Music Centre for concerts
 - City Library for books in English or other languages
 - Kuopio Museum of Cultural History, Kuopio Art Museum
 - Sykettä Sports





I hope you will have great learning experiences during your stay in Kuopio!

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