

Cross-Cultural Workers Learn to Cope with Stress

The causes, symptoms and cure of inevitable stress of cross-cultural work remain well understood by professionals, as well as by wizened old workers. Ministry leaders consult with such experts to find ways in which to help new workers and poorly-adjusted old workers to become content, stay healthy and prove fruitful whilst working in a different culture.

Sensitive administrators and flexible counselors learn to draw on a variety of insights to help workers make necessary adjustments. After lovingly listening to a worker or to a married couple pour out their heart, you must look for issues and solutions along several lines.

Administrative. If workers feel frustrated in their assignment, or they do not perform to expectation, then ministry leaders may seek other assignments wherein workers feel fulfilled and become fruitful.

Cultural. If workers lack understanding or appreciation of the local way of life, or if their manners prove offensive to local folk, then help them to lay out a strategy for culture learning and adjustment.

Financial. If workers never have enough money, or if funds go missing, then they require clear guidelines for budgeting, spending priorities, record keeping and financial accountability.

Linguistic. If workers remain unable to converse in a common language after a year, then they need some language-acquisition tactics and accountability that suit their learning style.

Marital. If married couples quarrel, fail to submit one to another, or show disrespect one for another, then they require some clear counsel and instruction in biblical love and marriage.

Nutritional. If workers suffer from chronic illness, weakness, obesity, or allergic reactions, then better food choices may help. Consuming less sugar will usually help anyone.

Productivity. If cells or house churches are not reproducing, then workers may need an experienced mentor who can coach them for a few months.

Psychological. If workers get into interpersonal conflict, grow moody, withdraw from others, or suffer chronic depression, then personal counselling may prove helpful.

Social. If workers have no friends amongst local folk, viewing others as threats or as hopelessly wicked, then they should seek to bond with a few local folk by spending time with them.

Spiritual. If workers experience irrational fear, excessive temptation, or theological doubts, then pastoral care may help them through confession, Spirit filling and fellowship with Christ.

Theological. If workers appeal to abstract theology more than to Scripture, or they employ manipulative methods, then leaders may have to teach them sound doctrines from the Bible.

Solving issues in one of these areas will often resolve issues in other areas, as well.