

Why Does Everyone Keep Saying Sorry?

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People crave food, music, and familiar faces. For me, it was the obnoxious regional ads.

When I first moved to Canada, I was casually listening to Spotify when I heard an advertisement in English. No dramatic jingles, no over-the-top wedding sale promos. Just a calm voice selling car insurance. It was then that I realized I actually missed those ridiculously annoying Hindi ads.

A Teenage Bestseller (Almost)

Like any teenager who thinks she's about to write the next bestselling book, I started keeping a list of everything that felt *off*.

Nov 17, 2021 – I miss pickles and Indian sweets from my favorite store.

Dec 7, 2021 – Everyone keeps asking why I have cotton in my ears (to prevent cold).

Jan 20, 2022 – Lays chips here taste like wafers with some random masala.

Feb 21, 2022 – I miss terraces. Why don't houses here have terraces?

And the list kept growing.

Why is tax not included in the marked price? How am I supposed to call my professors by their first name? Why do restaurants close so early?

At first, these little things don't seem like a big deal. But when they start piling up, you wonder, *does it ever get better?*

Turns out...I was just in Stage 2 of culture shock.

The 5 Stages of Culture Shock

I'm not here to throw a textbook definition at you, but trust me, knowing these stages helps you understand what you're going through and how to deal with it.

Stage 1: "Canada is amazing!"

Honeymoon stage - everything is new and exciting! You're romanticizing your study-abroad journey, taking aesthetic snow pictures, and discovering cute cafés. *Best decision ever, right?*

Stage 2: "Wait... Canada is kinda weird."

Negotiation stage - the novelty wears off. You start noticing the differences, and suddenly, they *bother* you. Why is milk in bags? Why do people wear shorts in the snow? Why is everyone so polite!

Stage 3: "Okay, maybe Canada isn't that bad."

Adjustment stage - you start figuring things out. Maybe you've found a grocery store that sells food from back home, or maybe you've finally stopped converting CAD into your home currency (*well, almost*).

Stage 4: "Canada is home."

Adaptation stage - you've built a life here. You have a routine. Things feel normal. You've even started saying "thank you" to the bus driver!

Stage 5: "Home is not home anymore."

Re-entry shock - ever played *Snakes & Ladders*? Just when you think you've won, you land on a snake and slide back down. That's Stage 5.

You go back home after a long time, and suddenly, you feel like a foreigner in your own country. The roads seem smaller, the traffic louder, and you *miss Canada*. It's weird. But the good news? You re-adapt much faster the second time.

How to Survive Culture Shock

Culture shock can feel overwhelming, but you're not alone. Here are some ways to make the transition smoother:

Make your space feel like home

Your room is your safe space. Decorate it with things that remind you of home. Photos, fairy lights, a cozy blanket, or even your favorite snacks can make a big difference.

Stay connected

Homesickness is real, but staying in touch helps. Call your family and friends, and play online games like *Skribbl.io* or *Plato* together. Time zones suck, but a quick check-in can do wonders.

Explore your new home

Canada may feel unfamiliar now, but the more you explore, the more it'll start to feel like yours. Join Seneca's cultural tours, take a fun [liberal studies course](#), or try poutine (*just once*).

Get involved on campus

The easiest way to make friends? Put yourself out there. Follow [Student Life](#) and [SSF](#) for on and off-campus events and activities. Be part of various [SSF Clubs and organizations](#) like [Enactus Seneca](#) and [SLAFS](#) to find a community that gets it. You can also drop by the [Peer 2 Peer lounges](#) to connect with your peers.

Ask for help when you need it

There is always support available; you just need to ask for it. Here is a list of resources and support services for you to tap into:

- ↳ [WeConnect](#) – 24/7 crisis support in the language of your choice.
- ↳ [Counselling Services](#) – For academic stress, personal challenges, and mental health.
- ↳ [Peer Mentoring Program](#) – Get guidance from students who've been in your shoes.
- ↳ [Student Support Groups](#) – Meet people who share your identity, experiences, and background in a welcoming space.

At the end of the day, adjusting takes time. Some days will be great, others will be difficult, but every step you take is part of your journey.

The Ultimate Question

So, does culture shock ever go away? Short answer? Not really.

Even after four years, I still have moments when something feels off. When I miss home, or when I'm just tired of doing mental math to add tax at checkout.

But do you know what helps me overcome it? Purpose.

I chose this path. I am here for a reason. And that reason is what pushes me forward, even on the hardest days.

So, ask yourself - what is your purpose? Figure that out, and the rest will fall into place.

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Next blog, "*Conquering Canadian Winter Without Turning into a Popsicle*," publishing on Saturday, February 22nd.

PS. To answer the title question, yes, people living in Canada say "sorry" *a lot*. Sometimes they mean it. Sometimes they don't. Sometimes, they just say it to remove awkwardness. It's less of an apology and more of a social reflex. And trust me, before you know it, you'll start doing it too! :)

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