

Language, Food, and Stress: My Story of Adapting to a New Country

Berta Lozano

BEFORE YOU READ: Have you ever had to adapt to a new country? If so, what was hard about it? If not, what do you think would be hard?

Hard to Adjust

For many immigrants, it might be easy to adjust to a new country. That was not the case for me. I have had a difficult time adjusting to a new language, food, and culture.

Communicating at Work

When I came to the U.S., my supervisor was from Mexico. She gave me instructions in my own language. Then my job changed, and I was sent to work with native English speakers. My first experience with them was like this: My supervisor asked me to change the water in the tanks. I did what my supervisor asked, but another person thought I did it wrong. He went to my supervisor and told him that I was doing something wrong. When my supervisor asked me what I was doing,



I didn't know how to explain it. I ran out of the building in despair.

After that, I felt frustrated, and I couldn't sleep that night. I was thinking about these people talking to me in English and telling me I was doing something wrong. It impacted me so much that I got a terrible headache and I had to go to the hospital. The doctor sent me to take classes on overcoming stress. I also saw a psychologist. Learning a new language has been quite a challenge for me, but I don't give up.

New Food and Flavors

Another challenge for me was the food. In the U.S., the food is mostly frozen. A *carne asada* doesn't taste the same. Also, vegetables and fruits are frozen, or they are grown with chemicals that can be dangerous for your health. If you want to get organic food, you have to pay high prices that only rich people can pay.

In Mexico, my mother used to cook twice a day, every day. She made tortillas every morning and evening. All the vegetables, fruits, and meat were fresh and grown at my father's farm. Cheese



and cream were made by my parents every day. Our food was almost 100% organic. Real homemade food can make a big difference not only in taste but in how it makes you feel. In the U.S., Mexican food was tasteless for me. It took me a year to eat corn tortillas from the store.

Now, I prepare my own food and make my own tortillas. Furthermore, I know stores and farmers who sell good fruit and vegetables, meat, and dairy products for a reasonable price. It took me years to get adjusted to the change in food and flavors, but now I enjoy all the variety of good food that this beautiful country offers to me.

Culture of Stress

Also, people in the U.S. live under a huge level of stress. For American people, it is normal to work more than eight hours per day. Going from work to the gym is their life! They work really hard, and even when they go on vacation, they still answer calls or emails from work.

Mexican people love living more than working. For Mexican people, family is more important than anything else. On weekends, we plan a barbeque or go to the park with our family. Perhaps we don't have a lot of money, but we can go to the river and bring our food and everything we need to be happy and spend an awesome day with little money.



Surviving

It has been tough to adjust to life in the U.S., I have been able to survive by finding ways to manage my stress, attending English classes, planning healthy meals, and by having a good time with my family.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. What are three ways it was hard for the author to adapt to the U.S.?
2. What are three strategies she used to deal the challenges she faced?
3. Think about the difference between *adapt* and *adopt*. Try using both in sentences.

Berta Lozano is a student at Santa Rosa Junior College in Santa Rosa, California, where she takes ESL classes. She works in the Genomics sector in a BioTech company. She has been happily married for 23 years, and she has a daughter who has just graduated from SJSU. She feels happy when surrounded by family, friends, and her dogs. She lives every day as if there is no tomorrow.

