Shifting Cultures: the Emotional Passport
Staying Mindful of the Big Picture
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Emotions drive learning…. If you feel well, you are likely to learn well. Emerging Adults, by the nature of their age, experience simultaneous layers of changes and challenges. Studying abroad is usually anticipated as a positive opportunity. In addition to adjusting to “everything new” when abroad, 20 year olds experience significant neurobiological brain growth -- the active pruning and strengthening of brain neurons. The brain becomes more efficient during these years, able to plan, reflect, organize, and reason. So, physically, psychologically, and practically (just by leaving home), students studying abroad can at times feel overwhelmed and less skilled at quieting a variety of intense feelings which may or may not be familiar. Such normative mood shifts can impact staff personally and professionally. Positive language and guidance supports the community, such as: “How are you using your energy?” or “Moods shift when cultures shift.” Reflecting back encourages self-reflection. This chart presents two significant skill sets which will contribute to your and the students’ ability to harness energy, keep an eye on the “big picture,” and engage a successful study abroad experience.

The Big Picture

- Successful care of self and community
- Successful academic performance
- Successful steps towards professional goals/internships
- Successful cultural learning

Self-Care:
Skills for noticing and regulating energy and moods
- Capacity to take perspective, the big picture
- Routines!
  - Exercise
  - Eating well
  - Sleep
  - Mindfulness practice
- Managing Media use (Social, Skype time)
- Consideration around friendships
- Travel self-care
- Comfort seeking support:
  - Student Life
  - Wellness
  - Faculty
  - Friends/family

Other-Care:
Skills for awareness of one's connection to community
- Bystander noticing and responding
- Connecting with classmates, roommates
- Responsible drinking
- Connecting with family and friends at home, balance social media use
- Sensitivity to diversity, anti-harassment support