

## Getting Through a Hard Time While Abroad

Here are two ideas to use when going through a hard time. Remember, it is okay to let your KIIS program director and KIIS faculty know you are going through a hard time. If you and a therapist created a plan for you to use during hard times, use it now. If you don't have a plan, these two ideas could help.

### Mindfulness/Acceptance

This is the idea that having a strong and unpleasant feeling doesn't mean you have to do something about it. Instead of hitting the panic switch or immediately assuming the worst, be mindful...let the feeling just sit in your conscious mind, but don't act on it, don't feed it. Pretend you are a scientist and you are studying the feeling. Notice it, look at it, but don't automatically react to it or act on it. It might be meaningful, it might be nothing more than a random sensation due to a temporary imbalance in brain chemistry. While being mindful, it can help to practice slow and deep breathing, relax the muscles in your body, and remember the last time you felt happy. The worst part about anxiety is that it makes you want to worry about worrying. Sometimes while being mindful people find it helpful to distract themselves by "grounding"-focus on what your feet feel like on the floor, focus on what you can smell or hear around you, move your body if you are sitting still, sit still if you are moving around.

### Behavioral Activation

This is the idea that depression will make you want to not do the very things that will keep you from being depressed. So Behavioral Activation is basically doing certain things every day to prevent depression and to reduce depression once it sets in. Examples of Behavioral Activation include: get up and go to bed at the same time each day, sit down three times a day to eat (even if you don't eat, sit down to three meals), eat when you don't feel like eating, move your body for at least thirty minutes each day-move it enough that you feel a little out of breath but you can still talk. Sit with people twice a day, you don't have talk, but sit with them and hear their stories. Write letters to friends and family sharing your happy thoughts along with your sad thoughts. Pray/meditate/reflect-connect with your higher power and remember the purpose of your life. Look at photos/videos of happy times, happy people and remember that you are a part of that time.

### Phone Apps

Many apps exist today that help people going through hard times. These apps include directions for slow deep breathing/relaxation, and they include storage systems for affirmations, inspiring quotes, photos of friends and family, reminders, music, contact information and so on.

Here are a couple links about Mental Health / Mood Tool Apps:

- <https://www.adaa.org/finding-help/mobile-apps>
- <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/01/16/top-10-mental-health-apps/>

If you are under the care of a mental health expert, please consult with him/her to discuss which app might best help you.



Image found at <http://www.hcrnetwork.com/mobile-health-apps-smartphones-mental-health-collide/>