

At the end of their AFS exchange in Brazil, we asked some recent AFSers from the USA to answer two questions:

- ❑ What elements of your host culture, compared to US culture, did you find most difficult to adjust to in the areas of family, school and/or social life?
- ❑ Please note any advice you would like to share with AFSers destined for your host country.

Here are some of their responses:

Don't be shy to kiss girls. Especially to greet people, be sure to shake hands with all the guys and kiss each female member of the group on one or both cheeks depending on the region. If you don't do this you may appear rude or shy.

**Benjamin, Year, 2010**

Brazilians tend to open their hearts to you so much; you need to make sure not to break it. They are overprotective, sensitive, emotion, rational, and never give up. They are complex and simple people all at once...Family meals, gatherings, and parties are not to be missed. Brazilians are very neat, clean and organized people, and will expect the same.

**Cinthia, Year, 2007**

Diverta-se. (*Have fun.*)

**Nicholas, Year, 2007**

For me, integrating myself as a full functioning member in my school and family were really the breakthrough points. After learning the language, I finally started to come to know the other people in my school and to really befriend them. As well, with my family I feel like I won their trust and we became much tighter than we were at our beginnings together.

**Nicholas, Year, 2007**

Just be aware of the feelings in your host family. Families in Brazil are very close so if there is tension with a host sibling or host parent try to control your anger. Handle things in mature way by having a family meeting and just say how you feel and consider the things your host family has to say to you. Brazilians are very clean and neat with their things, so it is really important that you are very organized and clean. Just be respectful of rules and express your feelings as much as you can.

**Rachel, Year, 2007**

Keep your mind open to anything.

**Emelia, Year, 2007**

Lack of privacy in the beginning for me was quite difficult. Future AFSers from USA should expect to be in a collective society, rather than the seclusion of American culture.

**Cinthia, Year, 2007**

The most difficult area to adjust to was not having my Mom and my Dad. Thankfully my host family loved me dearly and I loved them dearly. They helped me a lot and for this I am really thankful. I still talk to them and still consider them true family...

**Rachel, Year, 2007**

In my host culture, for me, everything was different whether it was the food I ate or the way I dressed. It is, in fact, a totally different culture, but in the end I was able to adjust.

**Hayley, Semester, 2007**

I never felt right watching my host mother clean up after dinner while my host father would sit around and watch television. I usually would volunteer to help because it made me feel so bad.

**Hannah, Year, 2007**

Brazil is far more family-oriented than the US. I found school was more of an activity than a commitment as it is here.

**Carl, Year, 2007**

Be positive, it's over sooner than you know it.  
**Amanda, Year, 2007**

The style of living is much more relaxed but I found that to be a good thing. There's very little stress in day to day life.

**Lisa, Year, 2007**



Family: My family wasn't very close or supportive but I think that is somewhat strange for Brazilian families. Definitely if you are a guy you will get a lot more freedom coming from the US. School: Shorter days! Sweet! Very boring though and sometimes hard to get through because there are no activities connected with school.

**Mike, Year, 2007**

Be open. Try new things. The more you get involved, the more you find new friends and the more you get out of your experience. That would be my big advice. Do try at school as well, especially in the beginning because I think I learned most of my Portuguese in classes with reading,

**Shannon, Year, 2007**

Don't compare the actions, customs, and sights of your host country with those of your own; see the world as if you had spent your entire life prior to exchange as a blind person, [and you are] seeing the world for the first time.

**Sienna, Year, 2007**

Have fun! Don't get too caught up in anything. Just go with the flow but take charge so your experience is worth while. Learn the language!!!!

**Katie, Year, 2007**