

Workshop: New Training Strategies

Effectively Preparing People for Cultural Adjustment and Transitions



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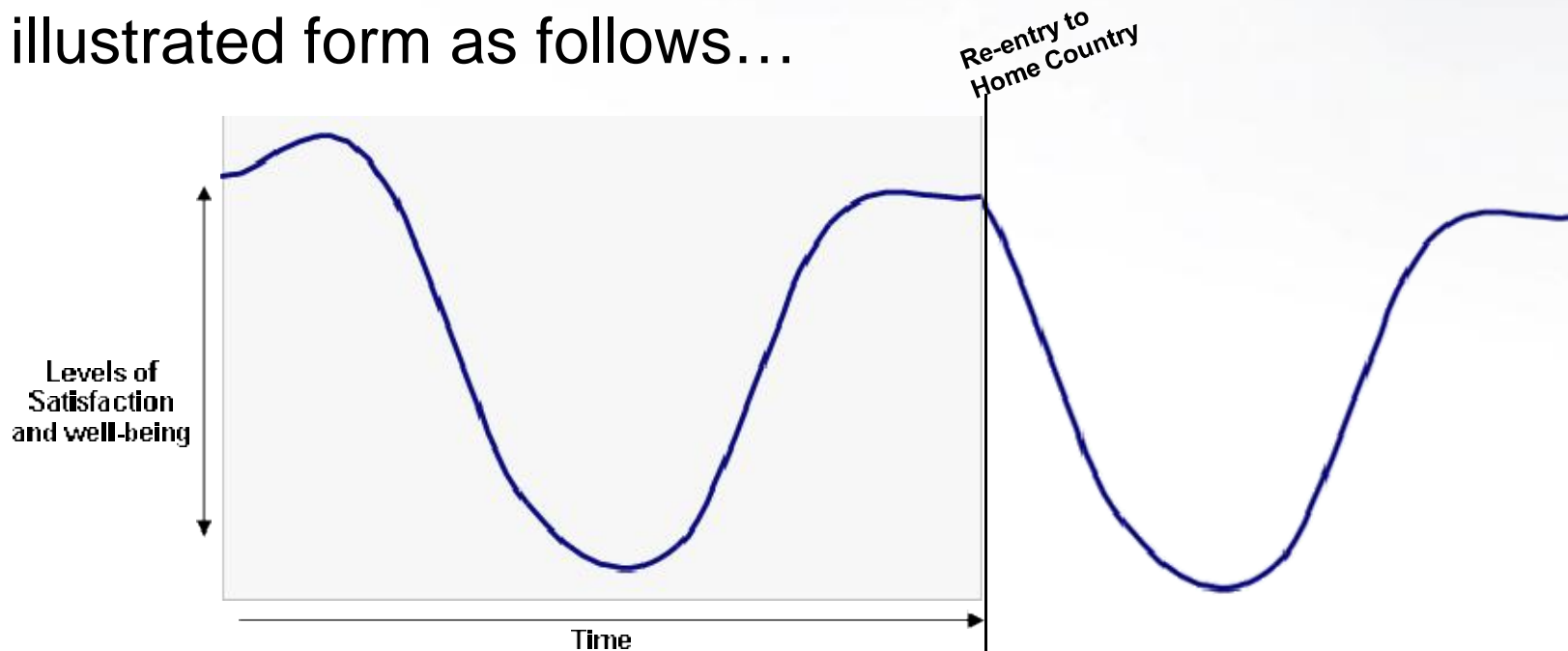
SIETAR Global Granada 2008

Saturday, October 25th 15:00-16:30

Definition - U-Curve (& W-Curve)



A model designed to describe the emotional adjustment process of cross-cultural sojourns over time. The 'U' shape suggests sojourner's emotional well-being begins positively, dips to a negative state, and eventually returns to positive levels of satisfaction. It is commonly depicted in illustrated form as follows...



5 Assumptions About the U-Curve



1

- Is the most common pattern of adjustment

2

- Applies to various kinds of sojourners

3

- Applies to various lengths of stays abroad

4

- Has typical time periods (e.g. crisis at 3-6 mo.)

5

- Is backed by research



“You can't expect to meet the challenges of today with yesterday's tools and expect to be in business tomorrow.” – Unknown



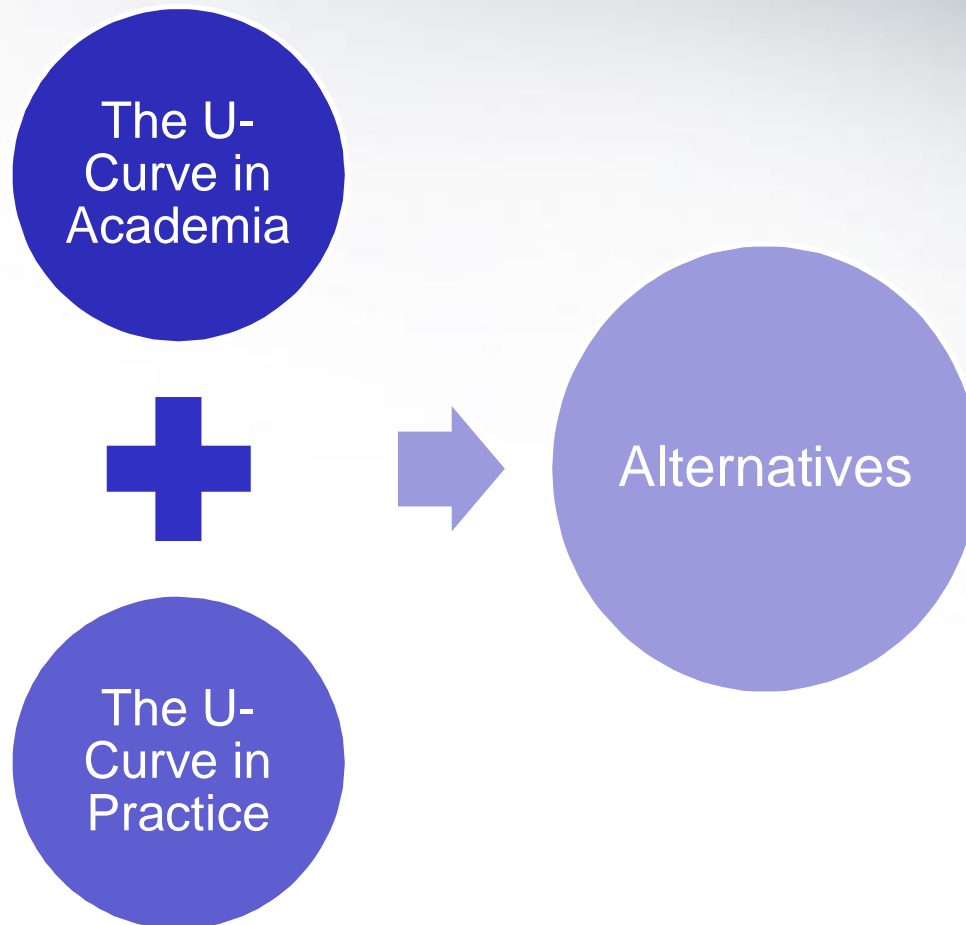
The question is not whether the U-curve model can be effective. The question is whether the U-curve model is the most effective.



The challenge is not finding alternatives to the U-curve.

The challenge is letting go of our dependence on the U-curve.

Flow for our Workshop



The U-Curve in Academia



A brief history of...

The original study
Testing of the model
Top conceptual criticisms
Dismissal in Academia



Berardo (2006). The U-curve of Adjustment: A study in the evolution and evaluation of a 50-year old model.

The Original Study



Lysgaard (1955) studying 198 Norwegian Fulbright students:

Adjustment as a process over time seems to follow a U-shaped curve: adjustment is felt to be easy and successful to begin with; then follows a 'crisis' in which one feels less well adjusted, somewhat lonely and unhappy; finally one begins to feel better adjusted again, becoming more integrated into the foreign community. (1955: 51)



Note that...

- There was no illustration of this U-curve
- It was a cross-sectional, retrospective design
- Some interviewees were reflecting on experiences of up to three years prior
- Three different groups of students were studied (<6 mo. → 6-18 mo. → 18+ mo)

Lysgaard recognized the limitations of his study. The U-curve was a hypothesis, needing further testing.

Yet the model quickly became popular and grew to be central to adjustment theory.



Empirical Testing of the Model

54 years of testing...

- Church (1982):
U-curve support is: 'weak, inconclusive and over-generalized' (542).
- Black & Mendenhall (1991):
'The lack of methodological rigor in many of the studies makes generalizing their results problematic.'
'a rejection or acceptance of the U-curve by scholars or cross-cultural trainers would be premature.' (231)
- 1991-2006 Studies
Additional testing, more challenges
Furnham & Bochner – When is a U not a U?

...And still no conclusive support

Top Conceptual Criticisms



Initial
Euphoria
(Honeymoon)

Simplicity of
the Model

General
Applicability &
Usefulness

One Pattern
Assumption

Dismissal in Academia...



The U-curve has been on-trial now for almost 40 years, and the time is long overdue to render a verdict. Despite its popular and intuitive appeal, the U-curve model of sojourner adjustment should be rejected. (Ward, 1998: 290)

The U-Curve in Practice



Research around...

How the model is being used
Trainers' attachment to the model
Perceived strengths of the model

About the Study...

Berardo (2006). The U-curve of Adjustment: A study in the evolution and evaluation of a 50-year old model.



Ongoing Use of the Model

The U-curve continues to being used frequently in practice

- 94% had used the U-curve model in CCT
- Nearly half employ it in 91-100% of their programs.

Perceptions of the Model



Trainers generally perceive the model to be

- *accurate and valuable*
- *important and somewhat effective*

Trainers rated the initial euphoria as being the most accurate



Confidence in the Model

The degree to which trainers noted the limitations of the model *varied considerably.*

Low Confidence: *Each model has its limits, several expatriates say they never go through these stages / The U-curve is a gross exaggeration or simplification...the graphed line can look as different as there are numbers of people.*

Mid Level Confidence: *This is **one depiction** of an adjustment cycle that (**most people**) will experience / This U-curve process **most likely happens to every expat***

High Confidence: *Certain phenomena like **honeymoon...are inevitable.** / It happens to everyone and it **WILL** happen to you! / **Everyone goes through this ...***

Many trainers were not aware of the *origins or controversy behind the model.*

Attachment to the Model



- *“It works so easily, it’s hard to imagine not using it.”*
- *“Just because we can’t prove the U-curve, doesn’t mean it doesn’t happen to most people. After all, we can’t prove God exists...”*
- *“Taking away the U-curve from trainers would be like taking away a hammer from a guy who’s job it is to drive nails.”*

Reported Purpose & Strengths



Purpose

Show 'normalness' of adjustment challenge

Enable more realistic expectations

Introduce and develop coping strategies

Strengths

Easy to understand

Clear visual

Helps to make sense of experience

The U-Curve in Practice



Dangers in Using the Model...

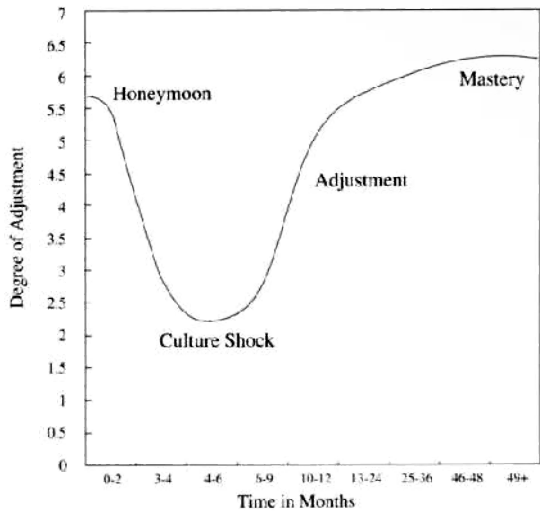
The Photocopying Effect
The Triple-Threat

Berardo (2006). The U-curve of Adjustment: A study in the evolution and evaluation of a 50-year old model.

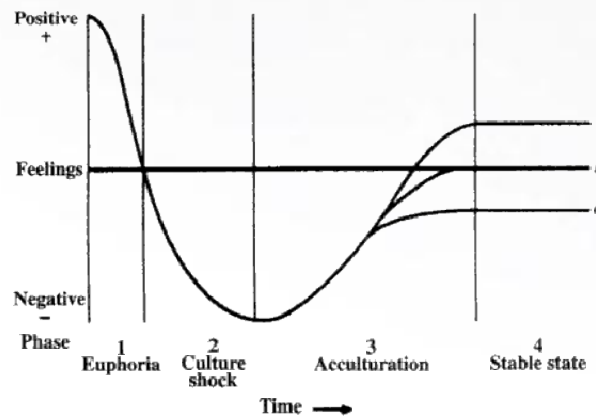


The Photocopying Effect

Illustrations of *varying complexity* often accompanied descriptions of the model.



VS.



VS.



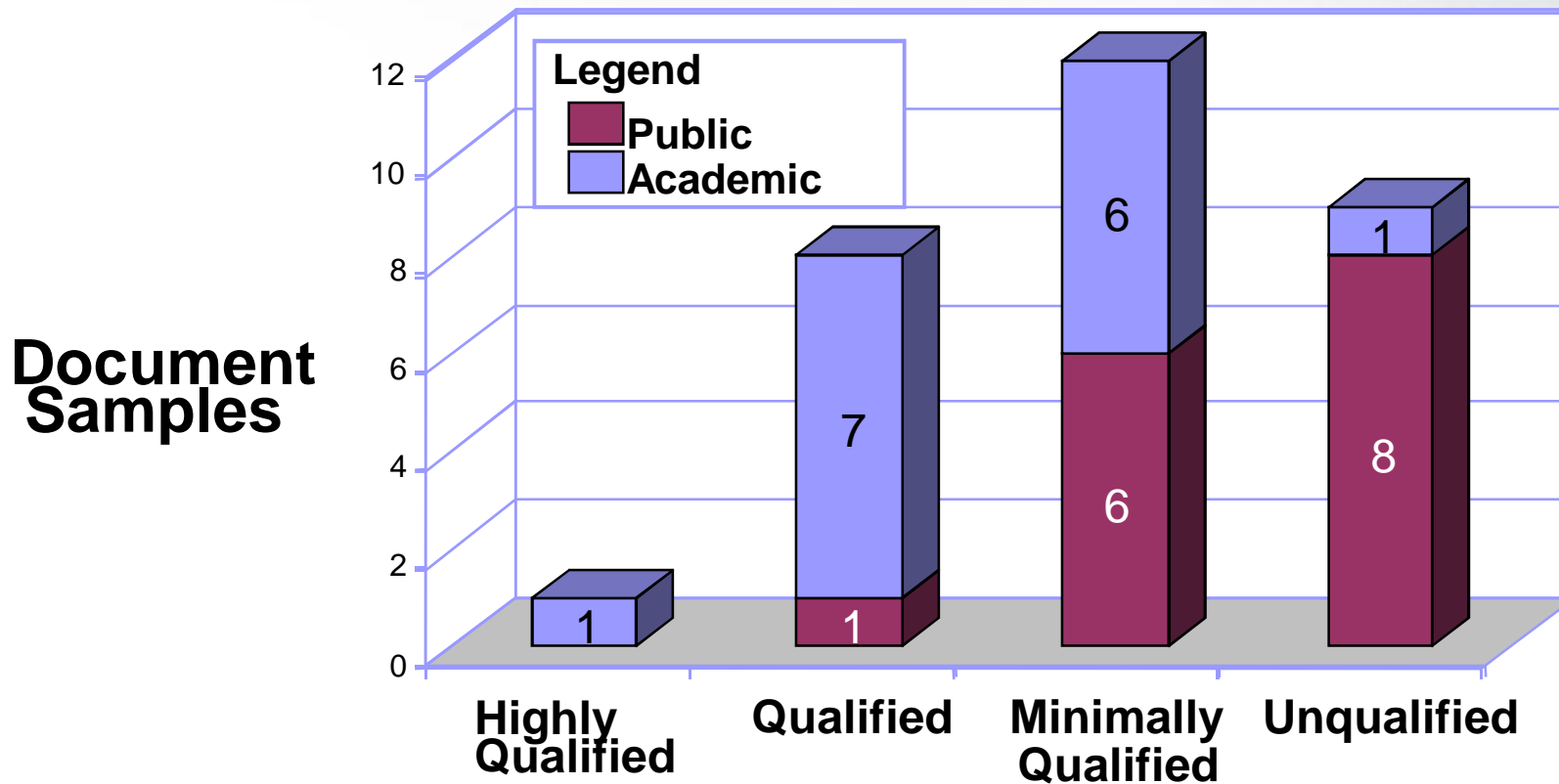
Important details of the model have been lost or distorted over the years...



The Photocopying Effect

Also, the controversy...

Many sources made *little or no acknowledgement of the controversy or limitations of the model.*



The Photocopying Effect



One-third of the sources *suggested* the U-curve model has *backing at academic level*.

False validation:

- ‘**Research shows** that most people ‘ / ‘The model is **well researched...**’
- ‘**Studies show .../ “Studies indicate” / “Many studies** have been done’... /
- ‘It has been the **subject of an extensive literature**’ / *Reference only to supportive studies*

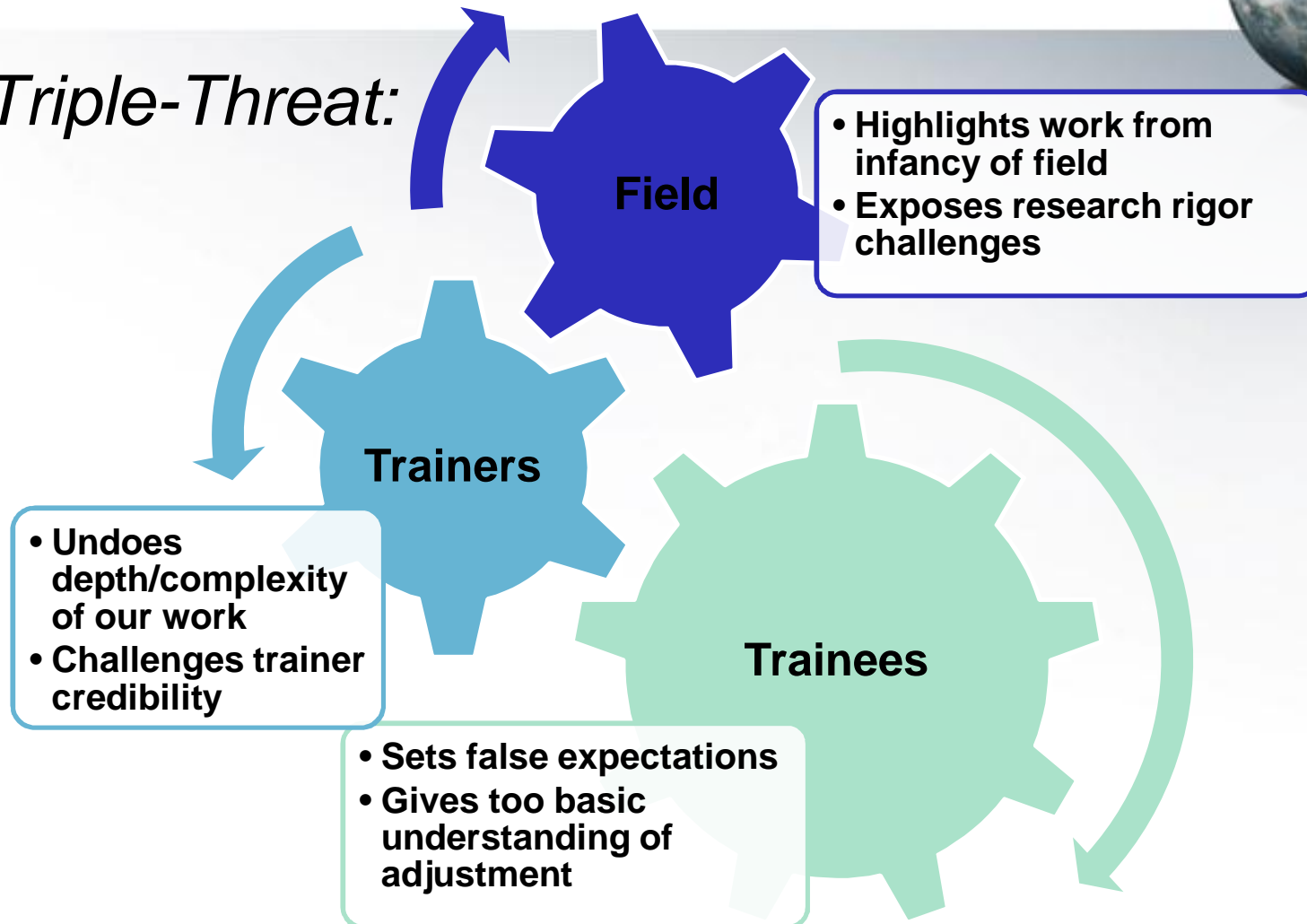
Suggested Agreement by Experts:

- ‘**Sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists** have divided the culture shock or fatigue phenomenon into stages. They say... /’
- ‘**Experts speak of**’ / ‘**Most scholars agree**’.



Danger in Using the Model

The Triple-Threat:



Ethical Presentation of the U-curve



The U-Curve should be presented recognizing the:

- Lack of supporting research & dismissal by some theorists
- High degree of variability and individuality
- Variety of patterns possible and documented in studies
- Variability in the initial period of euphoria
- Limited applicability to all sojourners

- & -

What the model does and does not cover

The Old Process



Show U-Curve



Describe 'Symptoms'
and/or Stages

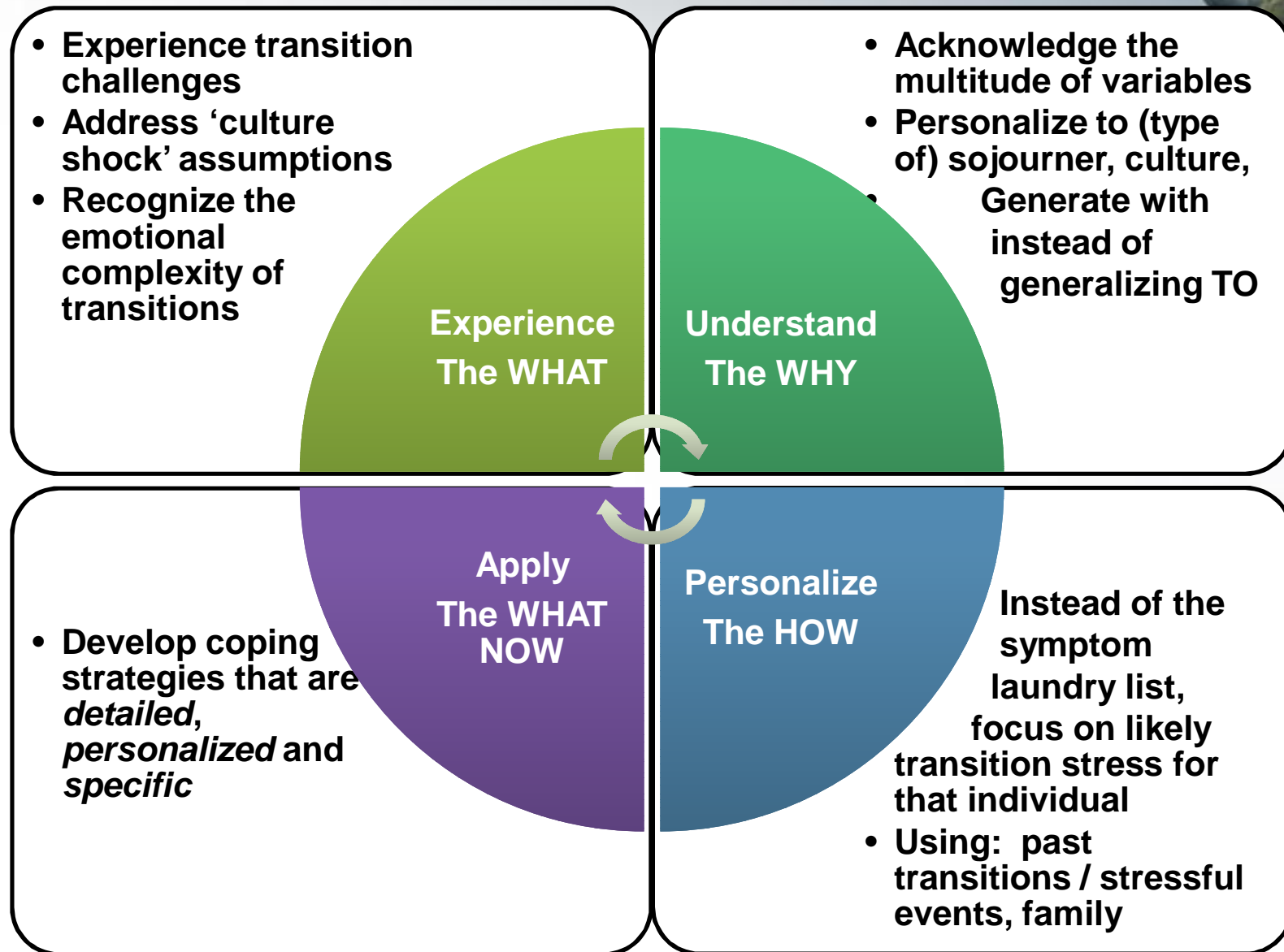


Provide 'Coping Strategies' and
Suggestions to Ease Culture Shock

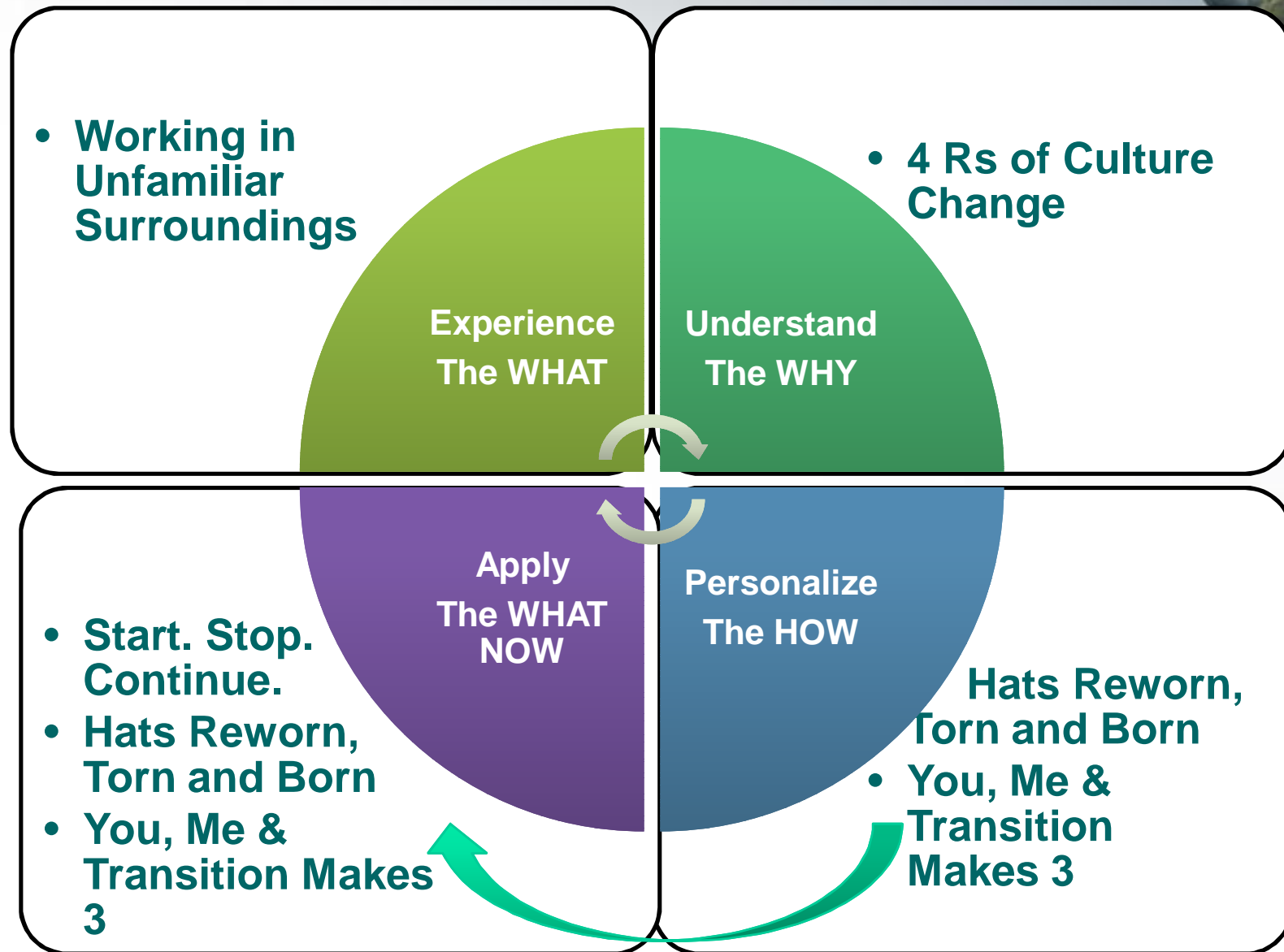
A New Process: 4 Components of Transition Training (Berardo)



A New Process: 4 Components of Transition Training (Berardo)

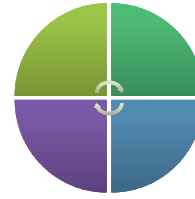


A Sample Process



Alternative Exercises

4 Components

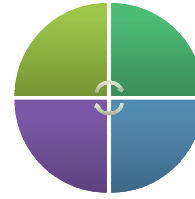


Experience
The WHAT

- Working in Unfamiliar Surroundings (Brandt)
- Noticing change exercise
- Non-dominant hand writing (Ting-Toomey)
- Tied-hands exercise
- A different route...
- Application / Date of Birth
- Paper Animals
- Watch switching
- Change in the Eyes of Others (Quotes)
- Barnga (Thiagi)
- Culture Transition Changes
- Stories and Vignettes
- Toe-to-toe standing exercise
- Assumption sort

Alternative Exercises

4 Components



Understand The WHY

- The 4 R's of Culture Change (Berardo)
- Analogies:
 - Rollercoaster, Merry-Go-Round (disorientation)
 - Changing of Seasons, the Remodel (for transition)
- Different Days, Different Ways (LaBrack)
- Story metaphor: Oh, the Places You'll Go, Wizard of Oz
- Models
 - William Bridges' Transition Model
 - Pierre Casse's
 - Kim's Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model
 - Jung's Process of Individuation
- A Day in the Life of...
- Island Dance
- Hat's reworn, torn and born (Berardo)

Alternative Exercises

4 Components



Personalize The HOW

- Worksheet: 5 fears, 5 excitements (LaBrack)
- What would you do? (Culture specific incident studies)
- Transition Reflection
- Change by Choice or Chance (Berardo)
- You, Me & Transition Makes 3 (Berardo)
- Visualizing Culture Shock
- Myself in Stress
- Circles of identity (and how this will shift/change)
- Rahe-Holmes list of stressors: Ranking and connect to past stressors



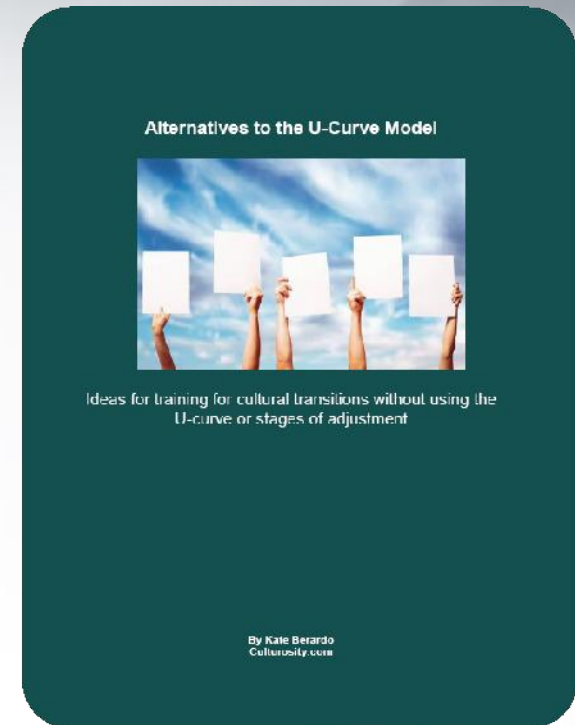
Apply The WHAT NOW

- Start. Stop. Continue strategies
- SMART Stress Management Action Planning
- Coping strategies sort and prioritize (on index cards)
- Continuities, connectors and comforts
- Support Network Mapping
- The Power of the Subconscious Exercise

Workshop Wrap-up



Thank you!
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Email kate@culturocity.com for
a copy of today's materials