

SOS Détresse

From taking the decision up to the moment of arrival

Migrating is a long and complex process, which involves three striking and emotionally-charged steps: **the decision, the journey, the arrival**. The final step, the arrival, is the longest and may never end; we never stop adapting, evolving between the host country and home country.

Leave or stay?

Migration already begins in the home country when we take the decision to leave, by building our project, and preparing for the journey. This brave decision to leave can be accompanied with worries about the future. **Will everything go well?** Am I going to find a job, a place to stay? The decision to leave means leaving behind something very familiar, and going towards **an uncertain future**. Faced with such a **risk**, we can become afraid. We fear change and the unknown, what others will say and think, failure, and above all, we fear our dreams meeting reality...

Of course our state of mind when facing the future journey will depend on whether the migration is temporary or permanent, desired or forced. It is not the same if we have chosen freely to leave and have been able to prepare our project, or if we have been forced to flee from difficult conditions that were putting our lives in danger. At the same time, it is not the same if we leave for a certain time, or if we leave forever. The support from relatives also proves to be important at this time. We experience the departure differently according to whether our loved ones encourage us or not in this project.

The arrival and the first challenges...

The arrival marks the first contact with the new culture. Perhaps someone is waiting for you to arrive, and you meet members of the family again. The impressions and feelings experienced in the first moments in the new country can be intense and remain in the memory for a long time. Some may feel disappointed with the first impressions. Others can feel curiosity and excitement, or even euphoria when arriving and discovering the new country. Everything can appear to be good, and the wish to have new experiences and meet new people is strong.

By settling in a new country, we nevertheless have to **face several challenges**. We have to encounter **a new environment**: a new type of accommodation, another type of food, a different climate, different codes in social relations... Depending on the

country, we have to learn a **new language**, or at least new social and cultural rules of living in a community. It is even more difficult if our own culture is far from the one we are meeting. We can come to a country where the political system and religion are different, or where people interact in a different way. When the cultural gap between the two countries is big, this also provokes a greater feeling of discomfort and insecurity within us.

Facing and adapting to all the differences is already upsetting, having many things to arrange and important decisions to take within a short space of time, and all of this in an environment which we are not used to. **Migrating involves changes**, which, independent of the fact of being in another country, are already stressful enough by themselves. We have to find a **new home** or move, as well as finding or adapting to a **new job**. Furthermore, we also have to completely rebuild our social network and get to know **new people**.

All of this requires a lot of time and energy. And in such a stressful experience, we can quickly feel overwhelmed. In particular, things that were easy to do before now seem more difficult in this unfamiliar environment where you have to use a different language. We can therefore feel less independent and competent than in our home country. We also have to re-learn new things that we may take for granted, in order to regain the feeling of control which we need.