Welcome, Volunteer!

By joining Global Neighbors' Mentor Program, you are playing a significant role in the health of our community. We thank you in advance for caring and working with us. We hope that through your relationship with your New American mentees, you will experience the joy of connecting with people from another culture.

As a volunteer mentor, you will be sharing information to help families and individuals integrate quickly and fully into their new surroundings. This handbook begins with a section of tips for volunteering with New Americans, as well as some possible activities you may partake in during your time with your new friends! These are, however, only suggestions of ways to approach the various topics and explore new things with the New Americans. Some New Americans may have interests that go beyond the scope of this handbook. Whatever the case, we encourage you to gear your session around your families' goals, needs, and interests, and not your own.

Following the tips and possible activities, this handbook includes information and descriptions on culture and culture shock, and also provides a look at the roles and responsibilities Global Neighbors has in place while working with the New American population.

Finally, this handbook provides a section of focus areas. Each focus area included in the handbook begins with some basic thoughts on what newcomers might need to know about specific "survival topic". This is followed by ideas on how to open up discussions. Because most New Americans need to practice English, each unit includes tips on tutoring English within that content area. We hope you find these materials helpful as you begin volunteering!

Effective mentors reflect an attitude of openness and accessibility. You want the people that you work with to feel they can ask you questions and that you will treat their beliefs and concerns with respect. This relationship-building between you is especially significant because you provide the invaluable friendship and trustworthy moral support that a newcomer needs. Because they are new to the community and the United States, they are especially vulnerable.

While the family will need to learn from mistakes, as we all do, your friendship and advice can save them a great deal of pain and frustration in their learning process. Your trusting and caring relationship with the individuals and families who have been resettled here can be vital to helping them become more comfortable to life in the United States.

This is also your opportunity to learn and understand another culture as much as it is an opportunity to teach about your culture and community. Remember that all immigrants have a wealth of experience and skills to share from their rich cultural background. Together you will be building community based on cross-cultural understanding.

We wish you a fun and rewarding experience!

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A note on terms used:

Throughout this book, "New American" and "Immigrant" are used interchangeably to refer to anyone born abroad who has come to the US to make a home here. The term "Refugee" is an official designation by the United Nations and refers to people who have been forced to leave their country in order to escape persecution, war, or violence.
So while all refugees are immigrants, not all immigrants are refugees.

Tips for Volunteering with New Americans

1. Take time to build trust. Because of past experiences, particularly for refugee families, building a trusting relationship may take time.

2. Be yourself. Share about yourself, too.

3. Accept that things won't always go as planned. Be flexible.

4. Enter their world and invite them into yours.

5. Answer questions honestly and always treat the families/individual fairly and with respect.

6. Celebrate milestones – point out how far they've come.

7. Give and receive – you are equals. Accept your own mistakes by showing your willingness to correct them.

8. Help build a bridge for New Americans to the community.

9. Don't offer something if you can't follow through. Keep your promises.

10. Set boundaries (time, tasks, etc.) Don't overcommit or overstretch yourself—this leads to early burnout. Let us help!

11. Misunderstandings happen. Communicate as clearly as possible.

12. If you don't know, ask. Be prepared to answer questions, too. You're both learning.

13. Some New Americans may want or feel obligated to give you gifts during your time working with them. Be mindful that you are not taking advantage of this.

14. Become mindful of cultural differences. Learn more about their cultures, customs, values, and cultural practices.

15. Volunteers are not mandated reporters. If you're uncomfortable with a situation, talk to a board member or staff person at Global Neighbors.

16. Refer to the appropriate agency when something is beyond your area of expertise. If you are not a social worker, healthcare provider, or refugee resettlement agency representative, do not attempt to take on that role. If you're unsure, talk to a Global Neighbors staff member.

"No act of kindness is too small. The gift of kindness may start as a small ripple that over time can turn into a tidal wave affecting the lives of many." Kevin Heath - Ceo More4kids

Global Neighbors Mentor Program
Suggested Activities Sheet

Take them on a tour of the city and locate important landmarks (i.e. hospital, library, grocery store, parks).

Help family members sign up for library cards and library English classes.

Cook and eat a meal together—either American style, or their traditional food. Maybe both!

Assist them in grocery shopping (i.e. finding a local store close to their home, educate them in price comparing, show them how to get to ethnic markets as needed).

Show them how to obtain a bus pass and spend an afternoon riding the bus.

Help them locate local thrift stores and take them shopping as needed. Explain the concept of garage sales and visit a few.

Show them where to buy international calling cards and demonstrate how to use them with the telephone.

Assist adults in coordinating ELL (English Language Learners) classes or in-home tutors. Help them enroll in appropriate community ELL classes.

Help introduce them to American currency and budgeting practice. Teach them how to write checks and use debit cards. Review bills with them to establish a monthly budget.

Help them locate free, fun activities to do, especially for families with young children.

Explore possibilities for after-school/summer recreational programs for children.

Assist with the process of getting a drivers license (not recommended to actually teach behind-the-wheel because of liability reasons with insurance).

Explore possibilities for affordable computer classes, job training programs, or higher education courses with adults (as necessary).

Teach them safety: (i.e. How to remain safe during a tornado, how to exit the home during a fire, how to call 911, winter preparedness).

For families resettled from refugee camps/deep poverty:
Explain how they can utilize food banks (i.e. the Salvation Army) and assist them in obtaining food vouchers as they are allowed (SNAP, WIC)

Explain how to clean the apartment and how different cleaning products work.

Help them in baby-proofing their apartment (if necessary) and explain the need to keep the environment safe for children.

Show them how to use different kitchen appliances and how to properly store food.

Culture and Culture Shock

What is Culture?

Culture is a tricky word. Though we all know what it means, it is difficult to define. Sometimes different cultures are thought of just in terms of ethnic dances, costumes or food. All of these are undeniably important and certainly fun, but do not come close to describing the all-encompassing nature of culture.

Many Americans believe that there is no American culture – until they spend time outside of the United States. There, they discover they have many deeply held beliefs and values that are in contrast with the thinking of the people in the host culture. Differences also exist in the many sub-cultures of any country, as determined by geography, history, ethnic background and even age.

For example, what we think of as the "generation gap" can be explained in terms of cultural differences. Grandparents grew up with different assumptions about the world than did their children and their grandchildren. In many cases, various generations of people don't even speak the same language!

Then what is culture? Culture is really our "map of life." It is our perspective of where we are and where we are going in our lives. Culture refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people and includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes. Another definition is that culture is a "set of behaviors, attitudes and values that is learned and shared by a group."

Examples of culture include:		
Values	Ways of earning a living	Manners
Customs	Ideas, Thoughts, and Attitudes	Politics
Ceremonies	Ceremonies	Concept of Self
Arts	Language and Communication styles	Social and Family Structures

Culture is embedded in everything we do or say or think. It affects us outwardly in many ways but also determines what we think is most deeply important. For example, the American culture highly values individuality. Other cultures place the greatest value on the group or the extended family and do not consider the rights of the individual as important.

The American culture also highly values productivity, whereas many contrasting cultures believe that the process is more important than the ultimate product.

When we work with New Americans, we are entering the realm of a different culture. Just as we can experience culture "shock" as we go and live in another country, we can also experience some shocks when we work closely with someone from another culture.

Learning about our New American friends' food, arts and ways of dress are a fun way to begin to relate. But we are mistaken if we think that we have mastered their culture at this level. Deeper cultural understanding comes with knowledge and experience of their most important values and a better understanding of our own value system.

Some Scenarios to Consider

There are many examples of situations where Americans working with New Americans have "bumped" into a significant cultural difference and felt the discomfort of not understanding the values of another person. In some cases, immigrants are unable to fully discuss the issue in English, though articulating one's deeper values is also challenging to the fluent. Consider these scenarios:

1- The New American friend does not keep appointments which greatly frustrates the volunteer who is always on a time schedule. In many cultures the concept of time is so different that the refugee might not realize that Americans generally keep very tight schedules and arrange their lives with their watch and calendar.

2- The volunteer feels helpless when they say they will bring the New American's three children to the park, but discovers twenty children waiting to go when she arrives. In many cultures, the rule is "the more the merrier," and it is difficult to leave anyone out.

3- A New American complains bitterly about a 20 year old nephew who is living with them and bringing trouble to the family. The American strongly believes that the nephew must leave in order to protect the family, but the New American says that this simply cannot happen, or he will lose respect in the community.

In all of these situations there is no right or wrong, but there are different cultural perceptions. While you may disagree, do not force your point of view (unless the New American are doing something against the law in which case you should talk with the organizations staff). In other cases when you feel a cultural "rub", talk with someone who might be able to interpret the cultural difference and, if necessary, help to communicate your expectations to your immigrant friends.

Finding out about a New American's values can sometimes be distressing when you disagree. But ultimately it is the deeper cultural understanding that makes the experience of working with New Americans so rich and rewarding.

Differing Cultural Perspectives

American	Contrasting
One schedules time to see friends.	Friends are available at any time.
Time is money.	Time is priceless.
It is important to develop the self.	It is important to develop selflessness.

New Americans and Culture Shock

The term "culture shock" describes the feelings of frustration and anxiety that often afflict people when they enter a different culture for a period of time. For New Americans the feelings are even more intense because they are not just going on a long vacation or studying abroad for a semester. They have come to the United States to start a new life. The fact that most of them will not see their homeland again makes their culture shock much more profound. Their experience has been compared to the grief process that people go through when they experience great loss in their lives.

The cultural dissonance that causes a "shock" to the system stems from the differences that New Americans face in their new home. First of all, they often have limited or no English speaking ability and thus have difficulty accomplishing the everyday tasks of life. Or maybe the way that they have always done things is no longer appropriate in a new and strange environment. New Americans often do not understand or like the way that Americans do things or the way that they think. They often feel frustrated about the constant confusion of the new rules.

Some Causes of Culture Shock

Difficultly with the language
Inapplicability of behavior
A different, complex set of values and roles
Different ways of thinking and problem solving
Dislikes about the culture and its people.

Immigrants also miss their past. They yearn for their country – its sights, smells, climate and food. They miss the familiarity of their daily life. They miss the celebrations and the special holidays they used to have. Though they often try to incorporate pieces of their country into their new home, there is always something missing.

An even greater adjustment for New Americans is living with the tremendous loss of family and friends. Immigrants in North Dakota usually have left behind many people who are very important to their lives in their country of origin or in refugee camps. Some refugees do not know where all their loved ones are and whether they are safe. Still other refugees must grapple with the painful grief over the death of loves ones who died in the war or during their escape to another country. This pain is intensified when refugees have been victims of torture at the hands of oppressive governments.

When people live through such trauma, they often move into a survival mode during the times when they are fleeing and living as refugees. They "turn off" all of their emotions and are faced with great emotional pain many years after their initial trauma as refugees. This psychological phenomenon is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and its affects many refugees once they are in an environment that is relatively safe. You don't need to fear PTSD but be aware that the emotional life of the refugee deeply affects their ability to cope in their new world.

Some Symptoms of PTSD

General anxiety	Sleep disorders	Nightmares
Loss of Appetite	Fear & Panic attacks	Lethargy
Loss of Interest in Life	Headaches	Dizziness

Some Indicators of Culture Shock

A particular concern for cleanliness or dirtiness.
Helplessness – a dependence on his/her family or others from the same country.
More irritation than is usually shown for things that go wrong.
A fear of being cheated, injured or robbed.
A concern for pains or skin eruptions.
A longing to be back home with people who understand.
A delay or refusal to learn the language of the new country.
Feelings of anger, indecision, frustration, anxiety, unhappiness, loneliness, and/or illness

A New American suffering from culture shock may also have feelings of rejection, which means that s/he is rejecting the environment which makes him or her feel badly. An immigrant may also have a feeling of regression, which means that the home country becomes most important and that he/she will choose to remember only the good things about it.

If this seems like a strange or unfair concept, just think about the elderly people in your life: don't they sometimes have a tendency to romanticize the past, and trouble adjusting to modern life and its values? Culture affects us all.

Stages of Adjustment

Culture shock may be viewed of stages of adaptation

Stage I – Euphoric or Touristic Stage
The person is experiencing the country for the first time. They are fascinated and thrilled by the new things they see. They tend to only see the similarities with their own country.

Stage II – Hostile or Aggressive Stage
The person slowly begins to feel uncomfortable. They being to see differences between this culture and their own that they do not understand, and this is disturbing. They are very critical of the new culture and may gather together with friends from their country to speak against it.

Stage III – Accepting Stage
Newcomers are now slowly recovering. They are becoming interested and sensitive to the new culture and people around them. Their sense of humor returns, and joking may even begin about new experiences.

Stage IV – Adjusted Stage
Adjusting to the new country is almost complete. They are truly understanding and experiencing the new environment in a meaningful way. They may still be convinced that some of the cultural practice do not make sense or are distasteful, but they have basically accepted the new culture. In short, they may actually be beginning to enjoy their new life.

Delayed Grief and Related Depression
Experience has shown that severe, immobilizing depression can surface many months after the initial settlement. Sometimes this happens when the difficulties of resettlement seem to be successfully resolved. After the newness of the U.S. wears off and the tensions of coping with

the resettlement on their own mount, immigrants and refugees may experience a "let down," or depression. Once settled they may also have time to grieve the loss of their home culture and family, something they were unable to do upon the flurry of their arrival.

Similar to the stages of grief, immigrants may go through a process of dealing with their loss and moving toward cultural integration. Refugees, in particular, may go through the cycle several times as they experience multiple losses and make several transitions from their country of origin to the refugee camp to the United States.

How to be Helpful

How can you help refugees get through this period of culture shock and grief? As a volunteer you cannot speed the process or cushion the sadness, but you can help by listening to the stories they need to tell. However, take heed to not force someone's story out but allow them to tell their story in their own time. It is their story to tell and never our right to know as the listener. In some cases, they might need to have professional help. Though counseling is a foreign concept in many cultures, contact Global Neighbors for possible appropriate resources in the mental health community. Concern and care are the basic principles to follow when helping people through the grief process.

The following are suggested ways to help a mentor to facilitate the healthy adjustment of a new immigrant.

1- Learn as much as you possibly as much as you possibly can about their culture and history.

Learn this through self-study and interaction with members of that culture. Study the history from the point of view of various social classes and ethnic groups. Obtain a bilingual dictionary in English and the New American's language and take the time to learn a few words in his or her language. Knowledge of the culture will enable you to understand the New American's behavior, the type of conflicts he or she is facing, and to differentiate between "normal" responses and responses which may indicate a deeper underlying emotional or psychological problem. (Please note: It may be up to you to identify a problem because people from many cultures will not tell other people when they have a problem.)

2 – Clarify the mentor's role with the mentee.

The mentor needs to explain to their partner what kind of help he/she can provide. We will help do this at the initial match-up. Some immigrants have unrealistic ideas about what a volunteer can and will do for them. You may also need to describe your own emotional and time limitations in the relationship. Don't be surprised if you have to repeat this information.

3- Give the New American a thorough orientation about what is realistic to expect in the U.S.

Of particular importance is the need to describe how much the New American can expect from others (including the government) and how much they must do for themselves in regard to resettlement, adjustment, and development of a support community. (Please note: Many refugees, particularly those from socialist or communist countries, regardless of their political orientation, expect many services to be provided by the government, e.g. transportation, housing, jobs, health care, etc. This may be a large adjustment for them.)

4 – Explain Key Factors of Adjustment to the New American.
One key factor in adjustment is learning to speak English. Two primary reasons for this are:

1) People who speak English have much greater chance of finding employment.
2) People who speak English can communicate with members of their new community.

►New Americans who don't speak English become increasingly isolated, which can lead to a loss of confidence, increased dependence on other, and depression.

The other key factor in adjustment is getting a job in which the New American feels he or she is making a valuable contribution to their family.

When it is not possible to find a job and/or a suitable job, the mentor may assist their mentee by encouraging them and their family to make some long-term plans about how they will acquire the education and skills needed to find a suitable job. In these situations it may be best to work with a professional at Job Service, the Adult Learning Center, or Global Neighbors to form a plan of action. These plans will probably require the cooperation and agreement of all the family members.

5 – Recognize the need New Americans have for a support community.
The volunteer mentor can be an important part of a New American's support community. A patient, understanding and encouraging mentor can help a New American overcome feelings of homesickness, loneliness, physical illness, anxiety, and depression.

Another source of support can come from the New American's ethnic group. Extended family members, community political and religious leaders, and ethnic support groups can provide extremely important sources of support.

6 – Be honest about the changes caused in adjustment.
Adjustment to life in the U.S. will probably entail basic changes in the immigrant's way of life. Family and community relationships and basic values will all be affected.

A mentor can assist the adjustment process by encouraging the New American to assess the changes in family relationships, i.e. between husband and wife, parents and children, etc. It might also be helpful to help them assess changes in their relationship to the community and in their basic values.

Changes in relationship and values will cause deep emotional responses on the part of the New American. Sometimes these responses are unconscious. When a New American can be articulate the changes and their effect upon them, they are able to define what they like and don't like about these changes. New Americans who can accept, modify and/or selectively choose the adjustments they are making adjust better than those who lose control of what is happening to them.

Unconscious dissatisfaction and a sense of loss of control, often lead to frustration and anger. These emotions often result in abuse to family members, psychosomatic illness, sleeplessness, depression, and in some cases suicidal tendencies.

Understanding Privilege

"Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they've done or failed to do. Access to privilege doesn't determine one's outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them."
This is a quote taken from Peggy McIntosh, the author of "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" in 1988.

A few examples of Privilege include being able to…
(http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/white_privilege.html)

- Assume that most of the people you or your children study in history classes and textbooks will be of the same race, gender, or sexual orientation as you are.
- Assume that your failures will not be attributed to your race, or your gender.
- Assume that if you work hard and follow the rules, you will achieve the success you deserve without other people being surprised; and without being held to a higher standard.
- Go out in public without fear of being harassed or constantly worry about physical your safety.
- Not have to think about your race, or your gender, or your sexual orientation, or disabilities, on a daily basis.

Privilege and discrimination are inseparable. To acknowledge that someone is disadvantaged due to a group or groups that they belong, then one must also acknowledge that there are privileges for not belonging to that group. The understanding of this concept is not intended to place feelings of guilt or shame on those who are receiving these unearned privileges, but to make one aware of the ways that you experience privilege. This is important in order for you to gain the ability to make changes and challenge the systemic forms of oppression and discrimination that still exist in our society.

Though the types of privileges and societal groups may vary, the concept of Privilege is not unique to the United States. While working with New Americans it is always important to understand that their views may be different than yours. This does not make one way right and one way wrong, just different.

Through volunteering with Global Neighbors you will hopefully be able to understand some of the unique challenges the New American population is faced with and at the same time be able to recognize the amazing gifts of knowledge and experience our new neighbors bring with them. Bismarck is home to over 2000 New Americans and the number continues to grow. Even though our community has opened to diverse populations and cultures (particularly with the oilfield activity that draws immigrant workers) there are still acts of discrimination that continue to occur. As volunteers you become an advocate for this to change; however, in order to work towards eliminating discrimination, we must also be aware of how we may be attributing to these factors, even if we do not intend to do so.

The following includes some additional examples of Privilege. By understanding the challenges and stress a person can undergo due to being excluded from some of these dominate groups the hope is that you will be able to modify your behavior as to not continue to enforce oppression

and discrimination, as well as, change some of the societal norms which are currently in place that do so.

Examples of American Privilege

(http://abagond.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/american-privilege/)

- You do not know what is like to have war in your homeland.
- You assume everyone wants to live in America, since it is the best place to live (even without universal health care).
- You can take the liberty of shortening or changing people's names if they are hard for you to pronounce.
- You assume everyone wants the USA to help them.
- You expect people in other countries to speak your language when you travel abroad.

Examples of Upper Social Class Privilege

(http://sap.mit.edu/content/pdf/class_privilege_checklist.pdf)

- My child is never ignored in school, and if there are problems, I am called by the teacher or principal.
- The decision to hire me will be related to my background and where I went to school.
- If I wish to my children to private schools, I have a variety of options.
- My citizenship and immigration status will likely not be questioned, and my background will likely not be investigated, because of my social class.
- Disclosure of my work and education may actually help law enforcement officials perceive me as being "in the right" or "unbiased."

Examples of Ability Privilege

(http://sap.mit.edu/content/pdf/able_bodied_privilege.pdf)

- If I need to move, I can easily be assured of purchasing housing I can get access to easily - accessibility is one thing I do not need to make a special point of looking for.
- I can turn on the television or open a newspaper and see people of my physical ability represented.
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having someone suspect I got my job because of my disability.
- I can buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, children's magazines featuring people of the same physical status.
- I can assume that I can go shopping alone, and they will always have appropriate accommodations to make this experience hassle-free.

Examples of White Privilege:

(http://www.amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html)

- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

Examples of Male Privilege
(http://everydayfeminism.com/2012/12/30-examples-of-male-privilege/)
- You can be a careless driver and not have people blame it on your sex.
- A decision to hire you won't be based on whether or not the employer assumes you will be having children in the near future.
- You can go to a car dealership or mechanic and assume you'll get a fair deal and not be taken advantage of.
- You are not pressured by peers and society to be thin as much as the opposite sex.
- Work comfortably (or walk down a public street) without the fear of sexual harassment.

Examples of Heterosexual Privilege
(http://www.bgsu.edu/downloads/sa/file13803.pdf)
- You can express affection (kissing, hugging, and holding hands) in most social situations and not expect hostile or violent reactions from others.
- You can act, dress, and talk as you choose without it being considered a reflection on people of your sexuality.
- You know that you will not be fired from a job or denied a promotion because of your sexuality.
- You can belong to the religious denomination of your choice and know that your sexuality will not be denounced by its religious leaders.
- You do not have to worry about being mistreated by the police or victimized by the criminal justice system because of your sexuality.

City Tour

Taking the New American family on a tour of the local area can be a great activity for all of you. Even if the family has lived in this country for a little while, they still may not know much about the vicinity. This is a good opportunity to expand their horizons. If the family has just arrived, you may want to expand this activity to a few sections, with a different emphasis each time. No matter how long someone lived in an area, there are always new places to explore. So be creative!

For example, New American parents don't always know where to go for inexpensive entertainment for their children. They may not know where the nearest park or playground is, or how to get there. Libraries are good places to visit so that both parents and children can find English as a Second Language material for themselves. A trip to the lake or a park is also a very welcome treat for people who are home bound, particularly if they have children.

Other places you might visit together include the local post office, police and fire stations, and hospital. Second-hand stores and other discount places are great destinations. Many volunteers also enjoy going with the family to the local farmer's market for fresh produce.

You might show them places that are important to you such as home, work, school, and church. Ask them what places they have heard about but haven't yet been able to find. They might suggest an itinerary.

Consider sharing some of your favorite places as new ideas of places they might want to visit sometime on their own. Keep your eyes open for "freebies" to show them how they can have fun without spending lots of money. Remember that simple pleasures can be the best!

If you live in an area where many New Americans live, the people you are working with will undoubtedly be able to expand your horizons as well. Ask them for a tour of the places that are familiar to them. Ask them to take you to their favorite international market, ethnic restaurant, or traditional church. You can learn a lot about their culture by experiencing it with them.

Housing

Housing in the U.S. can be quite a change for New Americans, particularly refugees who have lived for many years in camps. Though some may have an idea about Western-style housing, others will be baffled by their initial experiences here. They might not know how to operate appliances or how to make the most basic of household repairs. For example, if the family has only been here a short time, it is important to show them how to use the stove, refrigerator, oven and other key appliances.

Some New Americans end up living in sub-standard housing and may need help in dealing with landlords who are not treating them fairly.

Refugees don't always know the full extent of their rights and responsibilities as tenants, and you can help by teaching them what to expect in a rental agreement. In cases of dispute, you can act as an advocate by calling Global Neighbors and letting them know what is going on. In some cases you may also want to refer the family to a local tenant organization.

Your family may be looking for an apartment or they may hope to move in the near future. Though you are not responsible for finding housing, you can help by teaching them how to read ads, setting up appointments, and even going apartment hunting with them. Make sure they understand that they must honor any leases signed by themselves or a resettlement agency on their behalf.

Remember too that New Americans have to live in areas they can afford. Though they might not live in a neighborhood you would choose, they might have wanted to live near other New Americans or within their budget.

Discuss safety too, especially if the family lives in an area where there have been reports of crime and break-ins. Check to see if they have proper locks and can securely fasten their window. See if they have smoke alarms in the kitchen and near the bedroom. If safety items are missing, check with the landlord and local crime prevention group about resources.

Some Questions to Ask

Did you used to live in the city or in the country? How was your homeland different from where you live now?

Do you know your way around yet? What places are you having trouble finding?

Where do you go shopping?

What was your home like? Did you have a yard or a garden? Or did you live on a farm?

Was your kitchen different? How did you cook your food?

What kind of furniture did you have?

What do you miss most about your country and your home?

Some Topics to Share

Talk about your own feelings of going to or living in a new place.

Share information about your favorite bargain stores and what you like to do with your leisure time.

Show pictures or a floor plan of your own house or invite your mentee to your home sometime.

Tell them about any experiences you had living in a different environment.

English as a Second Language Tips

Take a map and point out the places you will be visiting together. During the trip see if they can describe with the map how to get to each destination. Afterwards look again and find on the map the places you have visited together.

Use opportunities from the tour to encourage them in their English language skill building. For example, if their English level is very low, work on identifying simple vocabulary about important locations such as the police station, public assistance office, school, hospital, and so forth, either with pictures or during your tour.

Help them develop skills in giving and receiving directions. You can teach this in action by going out on the street and asking "where is the _____?" Or you can practice with a simple map of their neighborhood. Remember that keeping the lesson real and practical is useful for the anyone in a new country.

Know that even if they are not yet able to use English that your moral support in taking them to places nearby will still help them grow in confidence toward self-sufficiency. Work on simple concepts like "right' and "left" and simple nouns like "house" through demonstration and labeling.

Work with them on how to read addresses and find the location. Have them practice writing and saying their own address so that they can fill out simple paperwork and answer the basic question, "Where do you live?"

Talk about cleaning products. For the newcomer, there seems to be no end to the array of different cleaners for American floors, toilet bowls, windows, dishes, and clothing. An all purpose cleaner, like Spic and Span, sometimes helps in eliminating some of the confusion. If roaches are a problem, perhaps bulk food (particularly rice) could be stored in a large plastic container with a tight lid. Boric acid is another way to help ward off roaches. If the problem is very serious, inform the landlord.

In many (but not all) cases, New Americans are living in a situation very different from that of their native land. Talk with them about the transition they have made. This type of sharing can be very therapeutic for them and very interesting for you.

For those who don't know much English, teach simple nouns that relate to things in the home. **One useful technique is to name the item, write it on a piece of paper, then tape the paper onto the item** (stove, refrigerator, sofa, chair, etc). This can also be done to label rooms, just outside the door of the bedroom, for example. The printed word may help speed their learning process.

Pictures can open up discussion about life here and how it differs from their previous experience. See if your library carries any pictorial resources such as in National Geographic, about their country of origin. Use the pictures as a starting point for discussion. Some families will have pictures of their own to show you. This time together can be quire rewarding because the New Americans may very much want to share their personal history with you.

Ask the family what their house was like in their country. A very communicative activity is for them to talk you through a diagram that they draw of their home in their native land or in the refugee camp.

For mentees who don't read English, a trip with you to a local grocery store can help clarify the use of cleaning supplies. Find the appropriate aisle and product; talk about how the item is meant to be used. You can also do a "show and tell" with products you bring to their home. The same could be done with safety products such as band aids or smoke alarms. Encourage them to ask the questions, like "How can I clean my sink?" "What is this used for?"

A great language activity that focuses on housing rental is to take the Sunday paper and practice finding suitable apartments. Teach them some of the typical abbreviations. For example, what does "Dup. 2 bd. 350/mo. + utils." mean? You can set up role plays about setting up and going to appointments. You might arrange for them to call you at home to practice using the telephone.

Clothing

There are many things to talk about in this unit. First of all, volunteers can help interpret appropriate dress for different functions in American society. What kind of clothing is best for work or a job interview? How does one keep warm if the climate is colder than you're used to?

This is also a good opportunity to learn about the traditional clothing worn in your partner's native country. There is often significant meaning behind special cultural designs and outfits. If you discover some significant needs for clothing, you might also help the family find the clothes they need.

People from every culture have their own ideas about what clothing is appropriate. What is considered appropriate or not will differ from culture to culture. However, a mentor can sensitively point out some of the basic cultural norms in the United States to help the newcomers in their adjustment.

For example, you can point out what is considered appropriate in an American setting for a job interview. You might serve as a cultural "interpreter" for children who want to wear what "all the American kids are wearing" and for the parents who do not understand the intense peer pressure the children might feel. If older members of a Southeast Asian family wear loose fitting pants and wonder why others might look at them strangely, you might clarify that it may seem to others that they are wearing pajamas. It is not for the volunteer to judge or suggest that they need to change their clothing, but rather to offer the American perspective to save New Americans the pain of cultural misunderstanding.

Many new arrivals to North Dakota are not used to cold weather. (**Note on refugees:** Most refugees arrive in the U.S. with little clothing, particularly winter wear.) Even those who have lived here for a while can dress inappropriately for the cold weather such as wearing flip flops outside during the winter. If your mentees are not wearing appropriate find out if they have

it at home or available to them, or they are just choosing to not wear them due to a misunderstanding of "cold" in ND, not liking the added bulk, etc.

Children are especially prone to running outside without adequate clothing. You can help by showing them what they may need to wear to stay healthy during a cold winter season. Where can you get a good deal on warm boots? What is a "down" coat and where can you buy one at a good price?

Though mentors are not required to collect clothing for New American families, any help offered is appreciated when there are obvious needs. Some volunteers collect good used clothing from their friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors. Others take the family to a local clothes closet.

Some new arrivals may enjoy getting donated clothes. Others many come from a culture in which it is considered unhealthy to wear other people's used clothing. Still others might have come from wealthier families and might not appreciate older, used clothing. Some newcomers may be smaller in size than the average American. **Before beginning to collect anything, ask the New American first if they would like this kind of help.** Then arrange accordingly.

Some Questions to Ask

What kind of clothes did you wear in your country? Do you still wear some of your traditional clothes? Where can you buy the type of clothing that you like and that fits?

What kind of clothing was used for special occasions (weddings, religious holidays, etc.) in your country? (If you are lucky, they may show you these clothes, model them for you or dress you up!)

What kind of clothes do you need now? Where do you go to get inexpensive new or used clothing?

Topics to Share

Where do you do your bargain shopping?

What kinds of clothing are appropriate for your workplace? Do you need to wear suits or can you wear casual clothes? Or do you have a uniform?

English as a Second Language Tips

This topic easily lends itself to a "show and tell" format. Find pictures of people from their culture dressed up in native clothes and ask them to say whatever they can about the clothing or the events to which they would wear such clothing. For a New American who is learning to read and write, you can create a language experience story by writing down what they tell you and then correcting some of the most basic errors with them. In this way, they can "write" their own story.

Teach basic clothing vocabulary using simple pictures from catalogues, ads and magazine. For learners with advanced English language skills, this exercise can be more complex; for example, they might want to learn the difference between certain types of clothes. For an interactive activity, bring examples with you and have them learn by pointing to various articles of clothing or by putting

them on. Example: “Point to the shirt,” “Pick up the pants,” “Put the coat on,’ etc. The more senses that are involved in the learning process, the faster the person can learn.

Role-play a scene in a clothes closet and help them ask for what they need. Use very basic sentence patterns. “I need a _____.” Try to set up a basic dialogue with a set of sentences that they can memorize. Keep the pattern simple and only vary one part of the dialogue as a time.

Example:

New American: Hello.
Clothes Closet Volunteer: Hello, can I help you?
N/A: Yes. I need a coat.
Volunteer: What size do you want?
N/A: I need a small size.

You can do some substitution work by carrying the item asked for and the sizes. Then take them to a local clothes closet to use their new dialogue and vocabulary.

A fun, language-rich situation is to take the New American to a garage sale. They can try to ask for things and even bargain for the best price. Practice before hand with articles of clothing, money and numbers. You can also practice shopping with play money and pictures of clothes.

Education

Immigrants come to this country with very diverse educational backgrounds. Some are highly educated while others may not have learned how to write their own language. Education can play a large part in the speed of their resettlement in the U.S. where educational standards can be high. People who have a lower level of education may take a longer time to learn basic English and may feel less confident about working.

Some many have an educational background that is not readily transferable to this country. This can be very frustrating and may slow down their path to self-sufficiency. Finding out about your family or individual’s background will help you to understand his or her perspective and the challenges ahead.

Immigrants with limited English language ability might be enrolled in English Language Learners (ELL) classes. If not, you might help them by locating an appropriate program; by tutoring them for extra practice; or by enlisting a friend or colleague to be a tutor. They will undoubtedly benefit from any extra practice they can get, whether you choose to have a structured tutoring sessions or just general conversation.

Ask them about their educational background. For those that are studying, ask how long they plan to study. Help them to think about the limits of their education. Like Americans, some people want to study for years if the opportunity is available and do not progress rapidly toward the goal of self-sufficiency. Help them to realize that most Americans must combine work and school, and that experience is considered very important in finding a job – not just education.

Volunteers can also help immigrants to understand the importance of their children's education. Some immigrants avidly support this already, but others are not used to sending their children to school. They may not know how to help them with homework; or, in a large family, they may require older siblings to help with the childcare rather than allowing them to study.

Mentors can help by talking about what is expected of the children in school; finding an appropriate place for the children to get extra help with their homework through a kids' program or the school system; checking into special needs that the children might have; and advocating for them within the school system.

Our system of education is probably very different from what they had in their own country. They may be confused about how the system works here. Share with them the basis of a child's educational path in the local school system. Answer their basic questions about educational options in your area.

Some Questions to Ask

Did you go to school in your own country? Can you tell me more about the education system there? What languages do you speak, read or write?

(If a parent) Do you know how your children are doing in school? Do they have any problems in school that you want to talk about?

What do you hope to learn in this country? (Or, what are your educational goals?) Are you going to English classes now? How many hours a week do you study?

Topics to Share

What are you feelings (or your children's) feelings about school?

What type of educational system did you go through? Did you go to college or a vocational program? Did you like school?

English as a Second Language Tips

If your mentee cannot understand the conversational aspects of this session, concentrate on helping them learn basic nouns related to school. Start with book, paper, school, teacher, and pencil. See if they can point to the items or produce the correct nouns. Use the actual objects for identification.

Ask if they would like help with their homework, if they are going to school. Go over the lessons they are currently studying. Reinforcing the material will help them learn faster.

Do a role play that is appropriate to their situation. If they are parents, try to make up a dialogue about on a parent-teacher conference. Have them make a mock telephone call to the school to ask how their child is doing. If they are in ELL classes, have them ask questions or voice concerns to their teacher at school.

The family or individual you are working with may want to know more about furthering their own or their children's education. Some may need help with identifying options for college or

post-secondary schooling. You could help them with filling out applications and with writing essays that are often a part of the process. You could role play a college interview, which could lessen their anxiety during the real thing.

Food and Nutrition

Family meals and traditional foods are at the heart of every culture. Long after other cultural traditions are gone, the food remains as an important part of an ethnic identity. Food is a fun way to share cultures. Some volunteers invite their New American friends to eat at their house or meet them at an inexpensive restaurant. Introduce them to the American hamburger or pizza (Note: Again, it is important to be aware of culture customs and rules when it comes to food, particularly if the family is part of a religion that observes clean and unclean meats.)

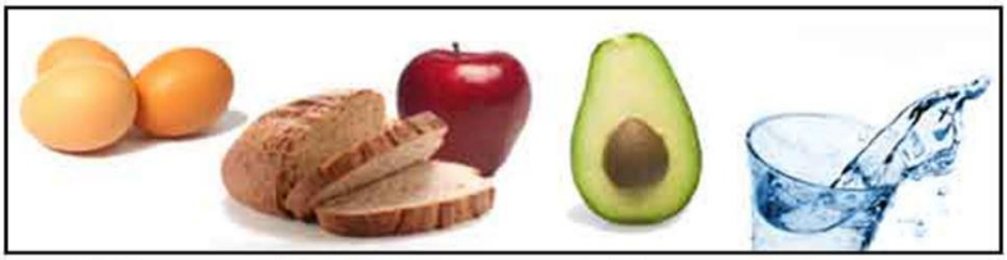
Many mentors are invited to share meals with their New Americans friends. You may love the food that they eat; or, you might find it too different for your liking. But it is always an adventure! Be sure to be grateful for their hospitality, and honest if it is something you are not comfortable eating.

Immigrants are often astounded by the range of choices in an average American grocery store. Even people from a more westernized culture are confused by the decisions they have to make. Since they don't recognize much of the food, they may make ill-informed choices about their diets.

For example, they might be inordinately affected by TV advertising. Many children eat sugary cereals that have never been a part of their diet and their teeth often suffer accordingly. Immigrants who cannot read well might choose to buy the highest price brands because of the pictures on the package, rather than generic of lower priced brands with less attractive packaging. They may not know how they can save money with coupons and special store promotions.

Though many immigrants come from a tradition of eating much fresher and healthier foods than Americans, you can help some families by talking about nutrition and the importance of a balanced diet. Americans eat a lot of milk products which may be unusual to them. Though the adults, particularly Asians, might never like eating cheese or drinking milk, these foods are very good for children's development and should be encouraged. Women who are pregnant or have small children might be eligible for the WIC (Women, Infant, and Children) program to supplement their dairy intake.

Some newcomers enjoy fishing; consult local agencies on the mercury levels found in some fish and to understand local fishing laws.



If they're interested in gardening, mentors can encourage this by helping them to find the right equipment and a place to garden if they have no yard. Bismarck Parks and Rec leases numerous community plots for this type of use. Check on local resources to teach New Americans how to can and freeze produce during the winter or non-gardening months. Many New Americans have much experience growing food to eat. They may be able to give you a few tips!

A field trip to the local supermarket can be rich experience too. New arrivals will need to know the basics of how to do their shopping. Others might benefit from some hands-on comparison shopping. They may be able to show you a few things about shopping for foods that they most like. If you are in an area with a large immigrant community, you might ask them to take you to the local ethnic grocery store to discover foods you have never heard of or seen.

You may have fun exchanging cooking lessons whether your partners speak English well or not. They may want to know how to make the things that their children eat in school. Show them how to use measures and read recipes. Ask them how to make a few of their dishes too!

Some Questions to Ask

What kinds of foods do you usually like to eat?

What kinds of food are your children getting in school? Do they like it? (Most of them have never tasted things like macaroni and cheese, pizza, and hot dogs until they come here.)

Can you find the fruits and vegetables that you like? Where do you shop for special foods?

What foods did you used to have that you don't have now?

Topics to Share

What are your favorite foods?

What do you normally eat?

English as Second Language Tips

Cooking lessons are also language lessons. You may want to show how to make an American dish that they might like to try. Sometimes children learn to eat pizza and other American "treats" and ask their parents to cook it for them at home. You can teach them about measures used in cooking and teach the vocabulary for the foods in your recipe. You can also ask them to teach you how to cook something. You could expand the idea to writing a recipe for their foods too.

Flashcards for a wide range of foods could be helpful in a number of ways. First of all they can learn to identify the nouns. The flashcards can be used to teach other words and sentence patterns. For example, practice different prepositions with known food nouns: "Put the corn on the plate," "Put the peas under the cabinet," "Put the squash on top of the corn," etc. This same technique can be used for learning verbs and other sentence structures as well.

Use coupons and advertisements to do some comparison shopping. Ask them questions and have them ask you questions. “How much is corn at Dan’s?” “Is the beef more expensive at Wal-Mart or Sam’s Club?”

Role-play going to a supermarket and asking for various foods. This would involve using simple questions like “Where is the corn?” “Do you have any pork?” and “How much is…” They will need to know various weights and how to handle money. Bring play money to practice and pictures clipped from magazines.

Take your mentee to a local supermarket to practice the role play. There you can act as a “coach” to help them say as much as they can. It can also be a good test of what they already know and what they can work on in the future. The same type of language situations can take place in a garden or a local farmer’s market or even a restaurant. Experiment and have fun!

Health Care

Many cultures have very different beliefs about health care. In some animist cultures, there is a reluctance to follow American health practices because they believe in the power of a shaman, a traditional healer, to cure the sick. Other New Americans might value Western medicine, but are unfamiliar with the level of care available. So while some are afraid to put their trust in American doctors, others are eager for the maximum amount of care they can receive.

Those who are wary of Western practices sometimes become less intimidated when they know more about our system and beliefs. It might help to share your own experiences in the medical system and what is seen as normal here.

In some areas, doctors are used to working with immigrants and may have even adapted their approach. In other areas where doctors are unfamiliar with cross-cultural situations, mentors can help by acting as cultural interpreters for their New Americans.

Immunizations for babies are routine here, but are uncommon in other countries. Volunteers can encourage New Americans to get the medical care available to them. If you are available during the day, you might consider helping them with transportation.

Mental health is another area to explore. Many New Americans experience severe culture shock and re-adjustment problems. Refugees might have been victims of torture in their own countries at the hands of oppressive governments. Others have suffered abuse while living in a refugee camp. These traumatic life experiences can lead to emotional distress.

Some newcomers suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with symptoms of dizziness, fatigue and loss of appetite, chest discomfort or pain, restlessness and nausea. If you notice that a member of the family is experiencing great difficulty, consult a professional. For other New Americans, the shock of a new culture can be eased with the mentor’s ongoing support and listening ear.

It is also important to remember that many New Americans who may be experiencing some mental health issues or suffering from PTSD will not want to talk about it. Allow them space to feel comfortable with you, to build trust, and let them speak as they wish. Never force a story out of your mentee; it is always their story to tell and no one else’s.

Some Questions to Ask

What kind of health care did you receive in your country?

What kind of traditional medicine and healers did you use?

How would you treat a cold or a headache (upset stomach, toothache, etc)? (New Americans often have good unique remedies for common health problems.)

Topics to Share

Have you had any big medical problems?

Have you ever been sick in another country?

How do you feel about going to a doctor?

English as a Second Language Tips

Teach vocabulary to express aches and pains. This involves teaching body parts and terms for simple ailments such as headache and sore throat. Use simple sentence patterns to practice this vocabulary. Point to your head and say "I have a headache." Point to your stomach and say "I have a stomachache." Substitute different family members in the sentences. "My baby has a cold." "My son has an earache." You can use pictures and gestures to help you with this lesson.

Using a telephone can be challenging for many immigrants. You can ease this fear by helping them role-play making an appointment over a fake phone. You could also arrange an "assignment" in which they call you at home to practice this type of call. For example:

Mentee: Hello, I need to make an appointment for my baby.
Nurse: Who is your doctor?
Mentee: My doctor is Dr. Nelson
Nurse: What is wrong with your baby?
Mentee: My baby's eye hurts.

Teach New Americans how to use 911. They should be able to state their name, address, and the problem. It could be as simple as "Baby sick," but it could be a life saver for the family.

Help them put together a first aid kit for their home. Use the elements in the kit to teach basic first aid. This can be done with people who have a high level of language ability or can be taught on a "show and tell" basis for those with limited levels of English.

Transportation

If the family does not have a car, they will need to know how to use public transportation. Being able to get around can develop skills toward self-sufficiency. Mentors can help by teaching New Americans how to use the local system. For example, how do you read a

bus schedule? When do you give the drive money and how much does it cost? Is there any place to call for general information on bus routes?

Biking or walking might be alternative if your New American family live in an area that lends itself to it. Teach them the basic safety rules for bike riding if they already have a bicycle. If not, you might help them to find an inexpensive used one. Garage sales or newspaper ads are good places to look.

They might also ask you how they can learn to drive. Coaching people through this process can be time-consuming, but it can be one of the most valuable skills that they gain in their early resettlement period. For many New Americans, the skill of learning how to drive is a precious one.

If they have access to a car, emphasize that a written test to qualify for a learner's permit is a must. In many states, they also need insurance. Be sure they know they must have a licensed driver with them and that they should not have children with them or extra passengers in the back seat.

Communicate very clearly on the commands such as right, left, slow down and stop. (You should not be the one to teach them if there is a tremendous language barrier between you.) When your mentee is ready, they can schedule a road test to obtain a driver's license.

As a mentor, you may also be able to give good advice to refugees who are looking for a used car to buy. You can show them how to consult the Blue Book for price guidelines or general consumer guides available in any library. You can teach them how to read the ads for cars and may even go with them to look for a good deal.

Safety is a key issue. Make sure your mentees have car seats for their children and that they use them. Even while walking, it is important to obey safety rules. Children need to know how to look both ways before they cross the street. New Americans who ride bicycles regularly should be encouraged to wear helmets for protection. Be alert to issues of safety that the New Americans might not understand.

Some Questions to Ask

What kind of transportation did you use in your country? Did you drive?

How do you usually get to the places you need to go? Do you take a bus, drive, or walk?

Have you been anywhere in the U.S. or around the state? (You may be surprised that some New Americans have been to several places in the U.S. already to visit friends or family.)

Topics to Share

How did you learn to drive? Was it fun or scary?

What kinds of transportation have you used in your travels?

English as a Second Language Tips

Telling the time is a critical skill. Practice with a clock or add moveable arms to a paper plate. You can expand this to digital clocks and then to reading bus schedules.

Do a role-play about asking for bus information. “How can I get to Sixth and Lexington?” If your local bus company has an information line, you can have the mentee call to ask for some specific information. See if they can understand what is said to them and if they can remember the directions. They might need to know how to ask for clarification “Excuse me, I didn’t understand. Can you say it more slowly?” Listening comprehension is a critical but difficult skill for beginners. You may have to practice a lot.

A driver’s manual is difficult for most immigrants to decipher, though many have learned to drive well. You can help pick out the key points in the driving manual for practice, though many immigrants pass the written exam through trial and error.

Role-play a driver’s test. You can do this in a car or do a “dry run” in the house.

Suggest doing a role-play about looking for a used car and negotiation with the owner. They can also practice reading car ads and calling the owner to set up an appointment to see the car. This requires knowledge of money, times, and vocabulary related to the features of the car. Remember that bargaining can be done with very little language, but some is helpful to get the best deal.

Religion, Holidays, and Customs

These topics are perhaps the most intriguing and often expand in many directions. For many, the cultural differences in religions and customs are the most exciting part of working with New Americans. It may be easier to approach these topics with those whose English skills are fairly proficient. However, it is possible to share one another’s important holidays and customs with lots of show and tell and good observational skills.

One of the features that make the U.S. unique is the great freedom of religion and with wide variety of religions practiced. New Americans may have difficulty in understanding the subtle differences between many of the different Protestant denominations, but might be interested in knowing about the larger religious groups. If mentor a refugee, they likely have come through the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service program and may or may not have had contact with a Lutheran church sponsor.

It is important to remember that the religious beliefs of all people should be respected. New Americans are sometimes vulnerable to religious organizations that very aggressively recruit them. Remind them that they have the right to say “no” to people whom they may not trust.

On the other hand, New Americans may sometimes welcome invitations to learn or join in on their mentor’s religious activities or holiday celebrations. Be sensitive to the needs of the newcomers, and act accordingly in your decision of when or when not to invite them.

Sharing holiday traditions with refugees can be rewarding and fun. As you establish a relationship with the family or individual, you may want to include them in your family holiday events. A Fourth of July picnic with fireworks is exciting and can bring a piece of American history to life. Children always enjoy Halloween, but new immigrant children often do not have someone who knows how to take them around for trick or treating and how to make inexpensive costumes. You might also invite them to take part in special local holidays to help them feel welcome in the community.

The religious and secular traditions of Christmas are always special to share. The children of the family are likely to hear about Santa, present and Christmas trees while their parents might have little understanding of this season. You might invite them in your Christmas preparations or help them with a celebration of their own. In many areas, there are community resources to provide special food and gifts for low-income people during the holiday season. In any case, it is important for them to know the holiday does not have to mean spending beyond their means, but is a celebration of love and caring.

Customs and traditions surrounding the important transitions in life are always fascinating to observe and discuss. How do they celebrate the birth of a new child? What customs do they have for marriage and divorce? How do they commemorate death? Though religion plays an important part in the customs surround these events, each ethnic group has unique ways of celebrating and grieving. It is a fascinating and challenging adventure to learn about the range of ways in which these events are commemorated in different cultures.

Learn more about the New Americans' religion, special holidays and customs. Newcomers might be from a tradition quite different from your own – they may be animist, Buddhist, Muslim, or Orthodox Christian. Ask them to tell you about their religion or show you how they practice their religion. See if you can learn about or even take part in their special holidays. Many Asians celebrate the Lunar New Year and Muslims from all over the world celebrate Ramadan at the end of their religious fasting season.

You will undoubtedly learn more about the American culture as you consider what to share with your New Americans. Another world may also open up to you as you explore their religious traditions and special holiday seasons.

Some Questions to Ask

What religion do you practice? What other religions do people from your country have?

How did you celebrate special holidays in your country?

What are your special customs for birth, marriage, and death?

What is a polite way to greet an older person? How are people treated differently depending on their age and status?

Topics to Share

What is your own religious background? How do you celebrate special religious holidays?

What do you do for typical American holidays? Fourth of July? Memorial Day? Labor Day?

How does your family commemorate birth and marriage and death? Do you think that your traditions are "typically" American or are they different in some way?

English as a Second Language Tips

Bring a calendar and mark different American holidays and their holidays while you talk about them. Remember that their holidays might fluctuate from year to year according to the moon or a different calendar system.

Bring pictures to show a range of activities for holidays. See if they might have pictures of their celebrations or find some library material about customs in their country. They might be very excited to explain what is happening in visuals from their own traditions. Help them write a story using the pictures and English words that they know.

Use the pictures to teach a few key vocabulary words that have a special meaning to them. For example for a Muslim immigrant an important picture might feature a pilgrimage to Mecca. Some key vocabulary words could be: Muslim, Mecca, mosque, Mohammed, and praying. This activity will help them be able to talk about what is important to them, not just American traditions and customs.

For those with lower levels of English, use the calendar to teach the names of the months and days. Mark on the calendar the days you're planning to meet with them again. For a slightly higher level, use the calendar to practice past and future tense of simple verbs. "I will go to school on the 25th." "I went to the doctor last Monday."

Families and Children

Many traditional cultures place a very high value on family relationships. The family is the center of all activity and members often think of themselves in terms of their family unit rather than as individuals. This is quite different from the American tendency to emphasize individualism. To many New Americans, the extended family is considered just as important as the nuclear one. These strong values are among the gifts that New Americans bring to our communities.

Adapting to life in a new country places many demands on New Americans. Sometimes the family can provide great comfort in times of stress. At other times, the many drastic changes can lead to depression, abuse, or lack of control within the family.

New American parents are apt to feel left out as their children adapt more easily to their new surroundings. Many children learn English more quickly than their parents and end up acting as spokespeople for their family, thereby upsetting the traditional balance of power in the family structure. Some families experience a loss of control over their children especially as the young people refuse to adhere to their own culture norms and struggle to be "American" – or to find their own niche as a dual cultural person. The generation gap is often wide in refugee families. Simply talking about the situation can help a great deal.

Children in American society have rights in a way that is different form the norms of other countries. Here it is against the law to abuse children, whereas in some cultures harsh physical discipline is the norm. While Americans often believe that children shouldn't have too much responsibility, young girls from other cultures might be expected to take care of their siblings at a very early age. In some cases, this cultural difference has led to problems with Child Protective Services.

Domestic violence is not unique to the United States and may also be found in many cultures. It is important to point out that it is illegal in the U.S. no matter what. Both men and women need to know the laws regarding domestic violence. Some refugee women have chosen to go to women's shelters and in some states have asked the police for an Order for Protection to keep the husbands away from the house because of physical abuse. New Americans need to know that they could go to jail or be kept away from their families for domestic violence, again regardless of how they may have lived prior to moving to the U.S. New Americans must also need to know about their options in case they become/are victims of domestic violence.

Other family issues that may clash with American laws include early marriage and polygamy. In most cases, these activities can be hidden from public view. But they can pose serious legal difficulties if one of the parties decides to bring the situations to court. It should be noted that when immigrants enter the United States that they must chose to have a legal two-person relationship and that any other spouses will not be able to immigrate with the rest of the family (although children are able to with the consent of the parent who is left behind). It is also explained to them prior to coming to the U.S. that polygamy and underage marriage is illegal.

It is important when discussing this topic to remember that culture determines most of how we conceptualize life. Our culture governs our behavior. Therefore, the cultural values of the New Americans are not wrong, but are different. In some cases, however, there may be issues of legality of which they need to be informed. Finding out what your New American friends think about families, raising their children and relating as husband and wife will help you understand them better as they struggle to integrate the old and the new.

Some Questions to Ask

What was family life like for you in your country?

What are the rights and responsibilities of children in your country?

What are some of your marriage customs?

What is the position of men and women in your society?

How do you deal with domestic violence in your culture?

Topics to Share

What does your family tree look like? Are you close with your extended family?

What are some of the challenges that you think face American parents today?

English as a Second Language Tips

Use a family tree diagram to practice the words we use for various relationships such as grandmother, father, niece, and so forth. This will be more meaningful if you use both their family tree and your own. They are likely to enjoy knowing more about your family and telling you about their relatives. (Note: People from other cultures often have an intricate vocabulary for their relationships. It will be fun to try and learn some of their vocabulary.)

Practice simple sentence patterns such as "I have a sister," I have two brothers," and the corresponding questions, "Do you have any _____?" Keep the patterns simple and predictable.

Use pictures of your family and their family to practice relationship names. Put the English words on cards next to the photo so that they can review their English later on. Or copy the pictures and write simple sentences underneath such as "This is my sister." "My brother lives in Vietnam."

Use the language experience method to build a story. Help the newcomers say as much as possible about their relations - where they live, how old they are, what they do, how many children they have – and help them write this in simple English. In this way they can "write" their own story about the people they love.

Employment

(A note on refugee families: Many refugees receive some kind of assistance when they first arrive in the U.S. Unfortunately in some states, public assistance can become a way of life. Remember that although most refugees traditionally relied on their own family for support, many struggle to become self-sufficient here because of large family size, a lack of education, poor English, many years of non-productivity in the camp or trauma due to their experience of being uprooted.)

Each state differs in assistance procedures and level of benefits. In some states (and typically for small families and individuals in any state), New Americans must find employment immediately. It is also the philosophy of Bismarck Global Neighbors that the best thing for new arrivals is to gain durable, long-term economic self-sufficiency. You can encourage New Americans by coaching them through the process of finding a job and their first encounter with the American work world.

Employment for immigrants is often difficult for a number of reasons. It is common for people to be intimidated by finding a job in a culture using a language that is not familiar to them, and in a culture that is often not supportive of non-English speakers. Supporting a large family on a minimum wage job with no benefits is a terrific challenge, unless there are multiple wage earners in the family.

Some New Americans yearn to find a job, but do not have the appropriate training and experience necessary for the American job market. They might need to find a low skilled job or a training program to help them gain experience for special certification. It may be a difficult adjustment for a Kenyan medical doctor, for example, to realize that she or he may need to accept a job as a CAN (hospital aid) while working on recertification in the medical field.

Remember too that adjusting to life here calls for them to shift to a whole new way of thinking. Previously they were self-sufficient and took care of their families. Now they have to start all over again. Previously they might have not had to articulate so clearly what their skills and qualifications are. Now they have to survive in a highly competitive world that often measures human worth in terms of economic success.

In additions, like many Americans, they may not be sure if they have any skills. They may not have had to describe their capabilities in this way before. Especially as you get to know them better, you are likely to notice what strengths, talents and skills they may have. Let them know you notice. It will help their confidence and self-esteem, which in turn will encourage them toward self-sufficiency. Perhaps it will be possible too, to go where their strengths are to find viable employment.

The reality is that many immigrants will have to start with entry level jobs. This is true both for people who were professionals in their own countries and those with agrarian backgrounds. But some would benefit by going to school and working at the same time, as is common for many Americans. It may be helpful to explain to New Americans how they might study English or get skill training while working. Developing realistic alternatives with them may help them realize their ability to influence their resettlement process.

It is often a temptation to let the challenges of work go in favor of prolonging education. But work experience is a key that can unlock many opportunities for them in the future. They may have come from a culture in which the job they take is the job they have forever. Explain to them how this is not often the case here; that opportunities for change may be possible especially with the combination of education and experience.

Americans have a strong work ethic. Though many immigrants also come from cultures that have the same ethic, some are broken from experiences in refugee camps and from ongoing culture shock, while others are used to a more laid-back work culture. However, employment can give refugees a sense of dignity and self-reliance and can help them learn English faster so that they can reach their goals faster.

Some Questions to Ask

What kind of job did you have in your country? What kinds of skills do you have (what do you do well)? Did you work in the refugee camp?

What is your plan for the future? What kind of job would you like to have?

Topics to Share

What is your own work history and your own plan for the future?

What kind of difficulties have you had in finding work or making an employment transitions?

How did you look for your job?

How did you decide to do what you do now?

English as a Second Language Tips

For lower levels of English, practice identifying people in various occupations. Use the newspaper and magazines to find pictures.

Look through the Sunday want ads together; good online resources include www.jobservicend.com and www.indeed.com. Want ads often have lots of abbreviations and jargon. Help them to identify key words and read common abbreviations.

Practice filling out job applications. You may be able to use an application from your work place or from a local business. Some New Americans might be ready to assemble a very simple resume. You can help them set up a simple format and check their English for the final copy. The public library is also a good resource for help setting up a basic resume.

Role-play a job interview. Some New Americans come from cultures that teach them to be humble so when a supervisor asks if they can do a particular job, they might not respond with confidence. They also might not look superiors in the eye which is against American cultural expectations. Help them practice being assertive in the context of an interview.

Discuss with them what they feel they do well. You may be able to identify some kinds of jobs that make use of these skills. Your local library or Job Service is likely to have career planning resources that include a description of skills, both general and specific. Looking over comprehensive listing of skills before you meet with the family could point out strengths that you can encourage them in – besides being a good opportunity for you to review your own strengths.

Information Resources about Countries of Origin, Refugee Resettlement, and Culture

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services www.uscis.gov
National Customer Service Hotline:
1-800-375-5283

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in Fargo
657 2nd Ave. N, Suite 248
Fargo, ND 58102

Afghani Resources

Afghan Backgrounder
https://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/country-info/files/afghan-culture-manual.pdf

Afghan Students https://therefugeecenter.org/resources/afghan-refugee-students/

Afghan Culture
http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Afghan-Americans.html

Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Afghans
https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/afghan-special-immigrant-visa-program

Burundian Resources

U.S. Department of State Diplomacy in Action
Burundi page
https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm

Radio Isanganiro
http://www.isanganiro.org/

- Burundian radio station, in Kirundi and French

Burundi Blog
http://burundi2007.blogspot.com/2008/06/kirundi-basic-phrases.html

- essential Kirundi phrases, among other things

Iraqi Resources

Iraqi Refugees
http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/populations/i raq

BRYCS List of Highlighted Resources http://www.brycs.org/clearinghouse/Highlighted-Resour ces-Iraqi-Refugees.cfm

Somali Resources

Somali Refugees
http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/populations/ other-populations-from-africa

BRYCS List of Resources about Somalis http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/ResourcesSom aliYouth.pdf

BRYCS"Somali Bantu Refugees: Cultural Considerations for Service Providers"
http://www.brycs.org/documents/upload/SBantu-Service -Considerations.pdf

Liberian Resources

Liberians United Association of Grand Forks
C/O Reginald Tarr
Phone: 612-245-5120

http://www.theperspective.org/

- Resource site on the Liberian government

http://www.liberianembassyus.org/

- Embassy of the Republic of **Liberia** in Washington, DC

Congolese Resources

Congolese Refugees
http://www.culturalorientation.net/learning/populations/
congolese-refugees

Congolese Refugees
https://coresourceexchange.org/resource/congolese/

Helpful Links and Other Resources

-ND-Based Organizations-

Bismarck Global Neighbors
418 N. 2nd Street
Bismarck, ND 58501
www.bismarckglobalneighbors.org
701-595-0135

- Provides in-home tutors and mentors; hosts events, training, and advocates on behalf of New Americans

Global Friends Coalition
Grand Forks, ND
www.gfcoalition.org
701-746-8233
info@gfcoalition.org

- Provides in-home tutors and mentors

Lutheran Social Services New Americans Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota Fargo, Grand Forks, and Bismarck, ND
Refugee Resettlement Agency and immigration services
701-772-7577
http://www.lssnd.org/what-we-do/humanitarian-work/ne w-americans/nas-overview.html

Giving + Learning
Fargo, North Dakota
701-231-7147
http://givingpluslearning.org/
Provides volunteers to English language learners in the Fargo/Moorhead area

-Country and Refugee Information-

CIA World Factbook
www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/

U.S. Human Rights Country Reports
https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/

Amnesty International – International Human Rights
https://www.amnesty.org/en/

BRYCS – Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services "Refugee 101"
http://www.brycs.org/aboutRefugees/refugee101.cfm

CORS – Cultural Orientation Resource Center
www.culturalorientation.net/learning

Office of Refugee Resettlement - https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr

UNHCR – The United Nations High Commission for Refugees
www.unhcr.org

Bismarck Global Neighbors

P: 701-595-0135
Address: 418 N. 2nd Street
E: bismarckglobalneighbors@gmail.com
www.bismarckglobalneighbors.org
Follow us on Facebook
Sign up on our website to receive email updates

At Global Neighbors, we are deeply honored by our mentors' willingness to share so much of their time and selves with their New American mentes. Please allow us to support you as much as we can—do not hesitate to call or email if your partnership has hit a roadblock, wrestled an obstacle you can't solve, or if relations between you and your mentee (or their family) have become strained. We are here for you!