

ADAPTING TO A NEW CULTURE

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Part 1

Good morning - I feel very important, thank you for clapping I don't get this very often. Right, so my name is Shanaz Raven, I am a counsellor here at the university. I am based at the Counselling Service which some of you already know about. Anyone heard of the Counselling Service? The Counselling Service - nobody has, OK. Have you been to the doctors, have you seen a doctor any of you? So do you know where the Medical Practice is? The Medical Practice - where you see the doctors? No, that's good, you have been in very good health then. *It's not true, a lot of them have been to the Health Centre.* Well maybe people don't know the Medical Practice, maybe you know the Health Centre, OK. The Health Centre, so it's the same thing OK. I think they changed the name it's no longer called the Health Centre - I think it's a new name it's The Medical Practice, but it doesn't matter.

So if you know where the Health Centre is, this is where I am based. The Counselling Service is in the same building as the doctors, upstairs. Even though we are in the same building we are a separate service altogether. And I think that it is very important for you to know that. The reason why it is important is that the Counselling Service is a confidential service. So I think I will start by talking about that because that is very, very important. If you forget anything else I am going to be saying what I am going to say now is very, very important. As the lady was saying, I can't remember her name now, what is the lady's name? *Joan.* As Joan was saying I work with the international students so I am counsellor with my big title, 'Counsellor with special responsibility for international students' and also 'Counsellor and international student advisor'. And in this role I see a lot of international students. So what I am going to be telling you today is really vitally important that you remember. The reason why I am saying to you that the counselling service is confidential is because if you were to have any problems you would know that and it's not going to stop you from coming and talking to one of us.

If you have a problem, which is a psychological problem and by that I don't mean you have to have a big problem it could be that you are feeling stressed, that you are not sleeping very well. Or that you are not eating enough, you are losing weight, or you are putting too much weight. Or that you have started drinking or starting to take drugs, whatever, any of those things, however small, however big, it is very important that you come and talk about it before things get too bad for you. I have seen a student this week who has been struggling all the time she has been here. And she hasn't come to see anybody because she has felt worried that her sponsors in her country will know about the problems that she is facing. And she is too ashamed to come and talk to us because she is frightened that we will go and tell someone. Now what is important that you know is that we will not tell anyone that you have come to see us, either the university, or your tutors or

anybody in your department. They will not know you have been to see us. Certainly the people in your country will not hear from us, and that is the truth. It may be difficult to understand that but that's the truth, that we will not tell anyone that you have come to see us. Sometimes we do talk to tutors, but that is only with your permission. So if you come and talk to me about a problem that you're having and we decide that maybe your tutor needs to know about that. I mean let's give the example of the person I saw this week.

That person was struggling with her studies; she comes from a very different academic culture, from a different country, and she doesn't quite understand the way that this country operates. Now you are very lucky because you people who are already here and you are already learning about these differences, so you are the very lucky ones. So when you start doing whatever it is you will be doing afterwards you would already be aware of how this country functions as far as its education is concerned. This student didn't know, she was coming here for the first time and she was - she did not know what she was doing, she couldn't understand very much but she did not go and tell anyone. So it's getting a bit late because we are now in May and she has exams to take. So she has been suffering for several months. Had she come to see us at the very beginning, we could have done more for her, it would have saved her a lot of suffering. So what we have done, are doing now, with her permission, we are speaking to her supervisor, to her tutor who is going to be able to help her deal with the problems that she is facing.

So your department is not against you. If they know of your problems it's to help you. It's not going to be against you. They will do everything to help you and that's why the Counselling Service is there. Now it may be a strange thing. You know I, as Joan was saying, I come from Mauritius and we don't have anything, counselling, in Mauritius. Maybe in your own countries it is the same. You go to university, you go to school, you go to college and you have to study. You don't have the support necessary - necessarily the support. But in Britain in this university it is going to be different. So please remember that as I carry on talking.

Part 2

Right, so what I want you to think for a moment is this. Sorry I'm not a very good artist as you can see. I would like you to think this is a time line OK. This is now, where you are right now, and this is your graduation day, whenever that is. I don't know, it could be 2009, 2010, 2011 I don't know. But this is the day when you are finishing, you are graduating. Whether it's this course, after your degree, whatever. I am talking to you on the graduation day, can you imagine I am talking to you on your graduation day. I am saying to you 'why are you so happy' because that person looks happy. I am asking you 'why are you so happy?' and you are saying to me 'oh I am happy because I have done A,B,C,D,E.' Just think for a moment, imagine your graduation day and you are happy, why are you happy? What have you done to make you so happy? *It's time to go home.* Time to go home, OK. Right, what else? Pardon? You've got a degree, yes very important isn't it because that is what you come here for. *That's knowledge.* Now what does knowledge mean? What is it that you have to do to get knowledge? So you knowledge comes from interaction with other people, yes? Good, what else?

Teachers, so including the teachers, so that means you are going to get interaction with others, there are teachers, who else? *Students ...staff.* Staff OK.

What else have you done that is making you so happy? (student response unintelligible) So to be able to access the internet is that what you mean? No, no – get more information. *More information about my country I will be professional level there.* You will be more professional about your subject. Anything else that you come to university for apart from studying? What are you hoping? I mean I know that is what you come to university for to start with, to get a degree. But what do you hope to have get from your life at university by the end. What else? *A new experience.* What kind of experience? *new skills.* What kind of skills? *Skills about other cultures.* Other cultures OK? Knowledge of other cultures.

What about new, other new skills you are hoping to learn while you are in this country? Cooking! Brilliant. That is so important isn't it. I tell you if you don't know how to cook you will soon learn how to. *More independence..* More independence OK. Sorry. *Communication.* In what language? In English, so it is language OK. So there are many things here, many things that you hope to have achieved. So it's very important to be thinking 'what is it that I want from my time here?' because you then have some power and control over what you have to do. So if you don't stop and think – if you are only thinking 'I just want to get a degree' what do you think you will do, if you only want a degree. What will you do? If you only want to get a degree what will you be doing this year? *Studying.* Study hard OK. Now if all your focus is on your study and you work very hard, yes you will get a degree. Will you get the other things?

Now, that's another major downfall for international students. Because I was an international student and I know how much money you are spending on being here – a lot of money, is that right? Now some of you will have sponsors, some of you your parents will be paying for you. Now that is a major, major pressure on international students. I remember myself as an undergraduate student, going mad. All I was thinking about was 'I can't fail, I can't fail I can't fail' because I would be too ashamed to go home and talk to my family. Because I knew how much my father was paying for me and I was desperate, so really it made me very, very stressed and the more stressed you are the less you are able to work. That's the other thing. If you focus on study all the time, obviously its very important, but its also very important to look at other things. Ok we will be looking a little bit about studies.

Now if we were to make this – if we were to number them in priority which is the most important thing you want from here. *A degree.* Of course it is. *Students response unintelligible.* Speak English. So there are two things, the getting the degree is the most important one OK. *Student response unintelligible.* So that's very important as well.

Part 3

OK Right now let's look at the study for a moment, let's look at the study for a moment. Now how many of you think that studying in England is different from your own country. How many of you think that it is different? OK in what way is it different, do you think? *You are dependent on the teacher, rest unintelligible.* You are

dependent on the teacher. So in your country the teacher tells you more. Whereas in this country you have to do more independent learning. That's a crucial one isn't it. How many of you have noticed that. That about independent learning OK. That's not necessarily what you would be expecting from your own country, and it's a vital point about what we do in this country, we do teach you to be independent. I just want to sort of look a little bit at - before we go on there, I want to just touch on why is it different? I mean the independent learning is very important one, I think it's is a very interesting one. You might think, *I don't know where to start now*. Let's look at 'what is culture?' to start with. Now you don't need to write this down I'll make sure that you have a handout on this because I didn't bring any, so you don't have to write it down OK.

So a definition of culture is that *it is a whole range of human activities which are learned and not instinctive and which are transmitted from generation to generation through various learning processes*. This is one definition of culture. All of course, all of you have come from another country and of course it is obvious that now that you are in this new culture you going to have to learn something new about it. There are some skills about this culture, there are some values in this culture which are not going to be - which you are not going to be aware of necessarily.

I remember coming to England from Mauritius and I thought life was going to be just like it was in Mauritius except it was going to be in English. It didn't take very long, and maybe some of you have already noticed this for those of you who have been here a little bit longer. I realised very gradually after I had been here a few weeks that it was like playing a game It was like playing the same game of life. In fact I was playing the same game of life. But I noticed that there were some things which were different and it was like playing the same game of life except that no-one had told me that the rules had changed. That's what can cause culture shock. It's when you don't know and you are trying to find out, to figure out what are the rules of this new game, this game I am playing and who is going to tell me what the rules are.

So when you come here you are going to have to learn things about this culture which are not going to be - as the definition says, it's not instinctive. Just because you are in England does not mean that you are going to have to guess how people do things in this country. So being in a different (I'm just going to look at that one) so culture shock is the impact of moving from a familiar culture to another. So the moving away from your own culture to another is, the impact of that is what is called culture shock. It's also the shock of a new environment, it's learning the ways of a different country. Which is what you are doing at the moment. You are learning a lot of ways about being in this country. It's also the shock of being separated from those people that you love. Many of you here, you are here on your own. You have all the family, your friends, your colleagues, everybody who knows you are back home. Here everybody that you are going to meet, you are meeting for the first time unless you are lucky and you have come with a friend. And that is partly what is culture shock.

I just quickly want to look at what research tells us about culture shock. What research tells us is that when people first of all moved from their own country to another, they go through what is called a 'honeymoon period'. Do you know what a honeymoon is? Yes. *After marriage*. Sorry I can't hear what you say. *For newcomers*. Yes but a honeymoon is, the word honeymoon is associated with

people who have just got married. It is that period where everything is wonderful, OK, at the beginning everything is wonderful, OK, it's a new relationship as well. The person you have just met is fantastic nobody's as good as they are. And moving from one country to another is a bit like a honeymoon. Where you think, where the differences that you see are interesting, they are intriguing. So you may be amused for example by the way that we say 'thank you' in this country. Anybody notice how many times, how obsessive we are with the word thank you in this country? Have you noticed, Yes, all the time, it doesn't matter what you are doing, what if somebody says you like, if you pick up a pen and give it to you, you say thank you. There is no difference between the two.

And I am always amused when I go to the supermarket. You buy a loaf, you go to the till, you pay for it. You give the bread to the person at the till you say thank you. She takes the bread, she says 'thank you'. She says 50p please and I give her 50 pence I say 'thank you', she takes it she says 'thank you'. Then she put the bread in a bag and gives it to you she says 'thank you' and I say 'thank you'. So the whole conversation has been based on the word thank you. So not surprisingly foreigners think we are really crazy in this country. But we are very, very happy with this word. We love to use it and if you want to be successful in this country it to use the word thank you a lot. So also 'please'. You have to use please. At the beginning you may think this is very funny, these people, but these words are very, very important. At the beginning you might feel very excited and stimulated and curious so those of you who have just arrived, you are still in your honeymoon period where you think everything is going to be great here. But psychologically you are still protected by 'home', so home is very near.

The problem with a honeymoon is that it doesn't last, OK. I have been married for just 30 years and I can tell you the honeymoon doesn't last. I am still married to the same man, he's alright but he's not like he was when I first met him, so the honeymoon is definitely over. So you will find that, with culture shock it is a similar thing where, after the beginning, the initial period, you find that the differences that you were noticing at the beginning which you thought were so interesting like the please and the thank you, they start to bother you. You start noticing, and the differences that you see begin to bother you a little bit. So you might start thinking, you might start to think there is something wrong with me. OK. All these people - for example I remember when I was a student I went to the student canteen to buy something and I said to the woman - I didn't know what I wanted, I wanted some food and I said I wanted something and she couldn't understand what I was saying. She kept on saying 'pardon' and I repeated it. Then she said 'pardon' and I repeated it, and I started feeling very stupid. There was a long queue of people behind me and I really think there is something wrong with me. So you may find after a while if you start feeling a little bit confused, a bit isolated as you become more aware of the familiar supports are not there any more. That's very important then to be starting to think I am here alone, I know my friends are not here, my family are not here, who am I going to talk to? That's when you might have a bit of culture clash. So one example of that is that maybe some of you are maybe coming from a Muslim country maybe. You will go to the restaurant here and you may find for the first time you see pork on display. Maybe you have never seen that before and that can be quite strange, to see something which is so different, that you have been protected from.

Part 4

And then you may get to the point where you find that the differences are rejected. You don't want them. At first you might be thinking there is something wrong with me and the British are alright, and after a while you might start feeling quite frustrated and hostile to the new culture. So remember in the beginning you found those values a bit interesting, and then they start to intrude and then you start thinking. Actually there is nothing wrong with me, it's the British they are the ones. There is something wrong with them.

So you start thinking the way they behave with all their 'thank you's', their 'pleases' it's absolute rubbish. They know nothing about life, we know best, our country is better, our values are better. And let's face it we do think our country is better. I mean I do. I think, but it is very important to be aware that it is a stage that people go through and of course the good thing is that after a while you accept the differences and similarities, you become more relaxed and confident, you are able to cope with new situations, and you learn to build bridges. You start thinking OK there are certain things I will never be able to accept in this country but maybe if I am going to be living here I could start to make an effort.

So for example if you are a student who doesn't drink OK and you don't think that going to the bar is a good idea. To start with you might say OK I know I am not going to be anywhere near alcohol. Then after a while you think OK if the only way I am going to make friends, because friendship is something you have talked about before by communication in English, if you find that some people think that maybe the only way that I'm going to make friends with somebody is - you've met somebody in your lecture, you really like them very much. They invite you out and you think I really want to get to know this friend but maybe I will go to the bar with them, maybe I will not drink. So the compromise might be you do something that at first you would not think of doing but gradually as you become more relaxed and confident you might think OK I can go along with that. Of course that's very much about observing and looking at your own values and that they don't clash too much.

Now somebody said they would be very happy because it would be time to go home on their graduation day. You were saying you are happy you have to go home. Now what this research shows us is that when people have been in a different culture and they have been here for a while and they have adapted and everything, and they go back home, what do you notice happens?

Another culture shock - now that's the one that a lot of people are not aware of. Because you think that, fantastic it's time to go home 2 years and 3 years down the road now is fine. Then you realise when you get home there is another culture shock. It's a kind of reverse culture shock because if you think about it logically, if you are in this country and you have adapted. it means you have changed, it means you have changed. And when you go home people expect you to be exactly the same.

Somebody also mentioned about being independent. Now in my country to be independent as a woman is a bad thing. Independence is a dirty word in my country, in this country we have to be independent to survive. Independent

learning, some of the values of the culture. So the education system actually reflects the broader society. In the broader society we love independence. We like people to take the initiative, we like them to be independent, to do their own thing. And in the education system you also see the same thing. Now let's take independence, so you've been independent in this country, you've been able to take the bus, go to the shops, go out with your friends and then you go home and then you go out. Your mother says 'what time are you coming home?' and you say 'why do I have to tell you what time I am coming home'. I have been in England for 3 years I have done my own thing. I am going out when I want to, why do I have to tell you what time I am going to come home?'. So you may find there's a bit of a clash, even with your own family. Because they will perceive the change in you as not being something that they want or they like. So be aware of that.

Ok, now just looking at some of the main areas of cultural differences. I have already talked about the please and the thank you. Some of these are going to be very important because they are going to apply to your study. Just because you are studying, because you study you have to, it's very important that you understand some of the cultural values. British ideas of politeness is that whenever you want, you ask for something you always say please, never say 'give me something'. Now in my own language if I say to somebody give me something without the word please, the tone of voice will suggest that I am making a request. So I say 'give me a pen' I wouldn't say 'please give me a pen' I would say 'give me a pen' so the tone of voice would suggest that I am making a request. But in English, if you go to the shop, if you say 'give me a coffee' or 'show me where the sugar is' or 'where is the book on grammar?' - if you go to the library 'show me where a book is' people will look at you. They may not say anything to you, but you will find there has been a barrier between you and them - it will be a communication breakdown because you haven't said the word please. Because people will think that you are making a command by saying 'show me where the book is', which may be exactly what you are saying in your own language. In English, in Britain, this is going to be very very rude. So you always say please.

'Thank you' is the same thing. Whatever anybody gives you, has done for you, whether it is small or big, you always have to say 'thank you'. They are the first two words we teach our children when they are growing up. Even when they are very small the first words the child says 'give me a drink', we would say 'What is the magic word?' The magic word is please, so the child is being taught from a very very young age to say please because for us in this culture it is important. So if you are going to see your lecturer, if you are going to see your tutor for some help, you'll be using these words.

And 'sorry' is another one. OK, we are very very fond of this word 'sorry'. Even if you are not feeling sorry at all, it doesn't matter. So if you've made a mistake, or you don't know or you are not very sure, you would say 'excuse me' or 'I am sorry to bother you, will you let me know or show me', or whatever. So please, thank you, and sorry are the three words that are, the kind of, path to success in this country.

Part 5

Now I've mentioned personal space here as one of the differences. And I mention that because I know that for some people in our culture you'll notice that when people interact that in my country when we interact with others, we sit very close to each other. And we touch one another a lot. We touch and we will look in the eyes especially it's another woman and we sit very very close to them. In Britain, you will find that when people talk to each other, there is more of a distance. I don't know whether you've noticed that. Yeah? You'll find even if you are going to see your tutor possibly, you might find that the people like more space between them when they are interacting, when they are talking to each other. These are just cultural differences; there is no right or wrong way. These are just cultural differences There is no right or wrong way, they are just different ways. People in the world have found different ways of solving the problems of life. And each country has found different values, different rules, if you like.

So it's very important as part of the learning. You are talking about being with people from different cultures. Being with other people from different cultures also means about how they do things when they are different from us. Maybe they do things (different) from us, which may shock us, but part of the learning and the tolerance for one another is to recognize that people are different from us and that they do things differently from us. And in this university, we are very very keen on this whole idea of tolerance and respect. And we may disagree with what people do, in the way people behave, but that we have to be tolerant of them.

Maybe you've already noticed about time, in this culture we are very keen on people being punctual. In my country time is not as important in the same way as it is in this country. If here we say the lecture starts at nine o'clock, we mean nine o'clock. You come across queuing. OK? Another favourite thing that the British love to do is to queue. Have you noticed that? Even if there are two people in the post office, you have to queue, because somebody might think you are jumping the queue. It's another crazy idea of queuing. We like queuing. In Mauritius, we don't queue that much. If the bus comes, you just go in. You don't care anybody else. In this country you have to wait for your turn. And also there is another cultural differences is 'clean', what we regard as 'clean', and what we regard as 'dirty'. In this country, if you spit, people will look at you in a very strange ways - that they might even tell you that this is not acceptable. In my own country, people spit, and that seems to be fine.

Now I come back before we talk about the differences in academic things. I just want to talk to you about something about the stresses when you are adapting to various things. So I want you to imagine that inside you there is a container. I want you to imagine that inside you there is a container. It's a, it's a, what's the word I am thinking of - it's an 'imaginary container'. And in the container there is a tap, OK? There is a tap, and this tap is dripping stress. OK? And stress is going to be caused by all kinds of things, like for example, crossing the road, and you don't know whether you are looking right or left. Depending on where you are coming from, which way, which side the people drive on, that may be one of your stresses. You don't know which way. You go to the shops, and you want to buy something which costs £15, and you think what's £15 and you convert into your own currency. These are little things but there are many many many of them that

you are adapting to at the moment. And all those things are like little bits of stress. There are filling in, this container is filling up all the time.

When somebody moves from one culture to another there is a lot of stress that they are having to undergo because - even though you are not aware of it. Like the weather, like speaking in English all the time. Like thinking what does this word mean? Like thinking 'oh my heart is aching' but I don't know how to say it in English, like I feel homesick I miss my mother. Maybe some of you have children, I don't know. I miss my partner I want to talk to them. All these things, they are very little things, how do you interact in a polite way, when do I say please, when do I say thank you, all these little things are going to build up. What we find at the Health Centre is that in the first term particularly people start to show in physical terms, they start having a lot of health problems, a lot of headaches, stomachaches. They start to be very concerned about their health. Then the doctor says there is nothing wrong with you. Can you think, how can it be that there is nothing wrong with me when I feel ill. You have difficulties concentrating, You feel angry for no reason and you want to cry. You just want to cry. You don't know why. Somebody says something small like this and you just cry. You want to sleep all the time, or you can't sleep, OK. People say a lot of that. You eat too much or too little. A lot of that is to do with what is going on inside you. You are expressing it in physical ways and of course the body is the only thing we have got to show us all is not well inside us.

Which is why we have counselling because to empty that sometimes we need to talk. To empty that we have to do other things. Partly is to talk, partly is to exercise. Exercise is vital to your health, you have to exercise, you have to eat well to have a balanced diet. When I first came to England I discovered Mars bars. Do you know what Mars bars are? Good, good, I'm glad you don't know - because it is a very big chocolate and I ate a lot of it, at the beginning. That's not good for you to have too much of it anyway. So that is called stress and I am just thinking about whether I have a visitOK, Stress.

Part 6

Stress. So stress is when you think that the demands being made on you are greater than your resources. So what is being asked of you is more than you can give. An elastic band which you are stretching, it's stretching and stretching and stretching. And that's what was happening to that person I saw this week. That elastic band was stretched to the point where it was going to break if she didn't do anything about it. So that's what stress is. So to stop the stress you have to find ways of emptying that container. And all of you have to be aware of this container inside you. When is it filling up, what do I need to do about it? What is troubling me, and where am I going to go and get help about that? OK I want to, very quickly again, the time is goingI want to.

I have already talked about the British education system reflect(ing) the wider society. In that sense because we like independence we expect you to also be independent in your learning. Assertiveness, assertiveness means that when you want something you go and ask for it. So you say what you think. Now again this is not a very - in my own country to be assertive it not something that we value hugely especially as a woman. We are supposed to be quiet and not to say very

much and all that sort of thing. But in this country if you have a problem you are expected to go and talk about it. Your teacher is not going to come looking for you. The teacher will not come looking for you. You have to go - you take responsibility for your learning, you take responsibility for your learning, that doesn't mean you have to do it all by yourself. Now there's a very big difference between that. You have to take responsibility for your learning but that means you have to know when to go and ask for help. Who can help me? - your tutors are there for you in your department, they can help you. But you have to be the one to take the initiative and go and say 'all is not well with me. I am having problems will you please help me'.

Of course you have to ask in a polite way, how to ask for help? Obviously there are times when you go straight? Maybe you need to make an appointment, you need to find out in your department. What is the way, what is the routine? Do you have to go and make an appointment, can you send an email to your tutor and say I want to speak to you because I have a problem. I didn't understand what you were saying in the lecture - how do you do that? And how do you do that politely? How do I address someone in authority? I mean I don't know whether in your department you ask teachers, call them by their first name, Colin? Yes. So you are already aware maybe you find that very strange in this country that students call their tutors by their first name. In my country you'd never do that. You would never call a person in authority by their first name, That would not be polite in my own country. But in this country if someone says 'call me by my first name' that is absolutely fine.

But if you don't feel comfortable with it I would suggestif I said to you 'call me Shanaz' and you find that difficult I don't mind if you call me Mrs Raven, or Mrs Shanaz if it comes to that. So be aware of how you feel. If you really feel this is going against your own values, then as long as it is done politely then you can call the person by 'Mr'.

Is it OK to challenge someone in authority? So let's say you are in a seminar group or you are in a discussion group. Is it OK for you to think about challenging someone like a tutor, like Colin? Would you be able to say to Colin - 'I'm sorry I don't agree with you' Yes. OK so that's alright as well. Because sometimes we think we are a bit shy. You can't challenge somebody who is a teacher, how can you tell them you don't agree with them? You can, in this culture you can, you must. He's not going to crumble. He's not going to be demolished by the fact that you are saying you don't agree with him. In fact he would be very pleased, he would be challenged. Well not too much but you know what I mean.

So to challenge a person in authority in this country is part of the learning. That teacher, he is there to facilitate your learning, so it's very, very important that you do that. How do you disagree - in a polite way? How do you interrupt someone? Now all these things, I am not giving you answers to that, but I think you need to be aware that when you disagree with somebody in your own culture, you probably do it automatically, you know how to do it. In this country you can disagree politely, you can disagree, but politely. Maybe this is something you can look at in your classes. How do you do that? How do you give feedback when somebody has stood up and made a presentation of some kind and they say maybe 'what do you think about that?' How do you give feed back? That's also very important. Some people think that if somebody comes and makes a

presentation and you ask them to give feedback maybe you tell them what they did wrong.

Now in the culture when we say 'to give feedback' we also want people to say what do you think a person did right. So you start by telling them 'I think you did that right, that right, that's right but I also think maybe you could change this. So you start off by, and that's the polite nature of the British, you start off with something positive and then maybe you go on and say something which is not terribly umm.

OK participating in seminars in group work, maybe this is something you are going to have in the future. When you are discussing something in a seminar particularly, I don't know whether you are doing seminar at the moment? Be aware that people are not expecting you to say the right answer, what you think is more important. It is more important. Don't worry too much about your English. Nobody is going to be thinking about your grammar. Your ideas are more important. So, don't be afraid to say what you think in a seminar group. Don't be afraid of contradicting somebody. But again, watch how people do it, and watch and do it in a kind of a polite way. Some people find that they only say something because it has to be right, because otherwise they feel ashamed. Because what they have said is wrong, because somebody has contradicted them. But that's part of the learning. To participate in seminars and to do group work is very very important part of the learning process in this country. So, you have to brave,

Ok now look after yourself. Ask for help. Take the initiative, ask for help when you need it. Don't wait until it's too late. Look after yourself. Eat well, don't eat too much chocolate as I did when I came to this country. Don't go and eat too many cakes, too many sweets, eat a balanced diet and that's very important. Sleep, but don't sleep too much. OK? Make sure you are going to a routine, go to bed in time, get up in good time. Don't change a routine and work at night and sleep during the day, fatal, OK? If you are having a problem with sleeping and that sort of thing, I will be very happy to talk to you. Have a good laugh, OK? Have a good laugh with one another.

Part 7

Don't speak in your own language too much. It's important that you do because that's relaxing, at the end the day you want to spend time, when you not having to think 'how do I you say that?'. So make sure you speak own language for part of the day. If you want to communicate you want to get to know other people, you have to speak in English, expose yourself to English. Listen to radio, listen to television. Try to expose yourself to English. There is no magic way of improving your spoken English other than practicing, with one another, with one another. And it sounds to me you can do it very well. What else was I going to say?

Don't spend all your time studying. If you spend 12 hours a day studying you will go crazy. OK? And we don't want you to go crazy. So, you have to take at least one day off when you do no work at all. And decide you will be your own best friend. Be your own best friend. OK. I really like you to think about that. Decide you will be your own best friend, in other words, if you're your own best friend

you treat yourself very well. Look after yourself. You don't tell yourself - you stupid person, why did you do that? You don't say that to your best friend, do you? Do you? If you make a mistake, if your friend make a mistake, you don't beat them down? You don't tell them they are stupid. You look at yourself in a mirror, you think how ugly I look today, you don't say that to your best friend. Oh, look at my hair, so horrible, you don't say that to your best friend. So, love yourself, be kind to yourself. And if you have a problem, you take yourself to the doctor, you take yourself to the counsellor, you take yourself to your tutor. There many people who are desperately wanting to help you.

So, I think questions now, there are other thing I forgot, you know joining clubs and societies, am I (5 minutes for questions)... for questions? So maybe I'll leave that, is that the last one? What I am going to do, I will send you a copy of this presentation, so that you can look at some other things I haven't talked about, will that be helpful? Yes. OK, we'll do that, then. OK, so any questions? Have you gone to sleep now? Have I bored you, have I bored you? No. Good, good. OK, ask me a question, then. May be I'll be able to answer, maybe not. (Question)
You talked about assertiveness and that is something that British people need to learn as well.

Absolutely. Assertiveness is a skill. I think there are other people who don't know, can't speak their minds who find it very difficult to say what they think. Now in our culture especially, in the Western world, we value people saying what they think. Which is why we don't mind if you tell us we are wrong. OK because that is part of being assertive. It is a skill that you have to learn, and it is easy to learn to be assertive. It's more difficult if you are an assertive person to learn not to be. OK so it's easy to learn how to do that, but maybe that is something that we can come and talk about. It's how you do that, assertiveness is not saying 'give me that', give me that is aggression. 'I would like you to give me this' is assertive. 'I would like you to help me' or to state very clearly in a polite way what I want is assertiveness. But assertiveness is not about demanding from the other, it is not about putting the other down - you walking all over them. But maybe it's something we could also find a leaflet on that, on assertiveness which we could give.

Any other question?

On the slides is also where I am, there are details here. So I am in the Health Centre, but on Friday morning, every Friday morning I am in the library, in Room 104 on the first floor of the main library at Whiteknights. You can just drop in, you don't have to make an appointment. There is a sheet on the door, and you can put your initial down or you can email me and ask for an appointment. Oh I haven't give you my email, oh it's there. You just email me and I will make sure that I see you. I will always make time to see you and to talk to you so it doesn't matter how small your problem is, please look after yourself. I wish you well and the best of luck and I look forward to the graduation day.