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Podcast: The Immigrant Experience in
America

THE BRIDGE
CONCEPTS 

— **GUIDE BOOK** —

FINDING BELONGING

T H E I M M I G R A N T E X P E R I E N C E

A guide to help you through navigating culture shock, integrating cultural differences, and finding belonging by tapping into your superpower.

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About Me

Over twenty years ago, I left Jamaica for the U.S., sparking my fascination with immigration. My career as a federal employee and former U.S. diplomat fueled my passion for understanding the immigrant experience.

This led to my book, ***Coming Home to Yourself: An Immigrant Experience Decoding America***, and hosting over 150 episodes of the podcast "The Immigrant Experience in America," one of the top 20 American culture podcasts with listeners in over 50 countries.

Integrating collectivist and individualistic cultures requires self-exploration, guidance, and a willingness to learn. It is a transformative journey of self-discovery that holds the key to personal growth and empowerment—your superpower!

This guide is the first step to helping you harness your unique strengths, embrace your authentic immigrant self, and unleash your superpower.



Simone



Life Coach, Speaker, Author, Podcast Host, and
Founder of The Bridge Concepts

Unlock your superpower:

**Schedule a discovery
call**

Culture shock shakes the core of our identity

If you've ever emigrated, you know that feeling deep on the inside of not quite fitting in. For many immigrants, finding belonging outside of their birth country can be a painful, disorienting and deeply personal undertaking.

This is because of the difference in ***culture***.



What is Culture?

Culture provides people with an implicit theory about how to behave and how to interpret the behavior of others.

Roger Keesing

Culture is learned. Culture teaches us how to think, conditions us how to feel, and instructs us how to act, especially how to interact with others—in other words, how to communicate. And it can be difficult navigating from a collectivist culture to an individualistic culture, and vice-versa.

Collectivism and individualism are key components in shaping culture

COLLECTIVIST CULTURE TRAITS:

- ☐ Group harmony and unity
- ☐ Family and community focus
- ☐ Modesty and humility

INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURE TRAITS:

- ☐ Personal autonomy and independence
- ☐ Nuclear family emphasis
- ☐ Self promotion

No culture is purely collectivist or individualistic. Elements of both orientations can be present to varying degrees in any society.

Most developing countries tend to be collectivist, as there is value in cooperation and sharing limited resources. While there are many valuable traits of collectivist cultures, there can be some misused and abused aspects. It is essential that immigrants remain true to their roots as a foundation to a healthy adjustment in an adopted country.

Adopted countries can be the place where immigrants come to forget who they are. Remember – when you leave home, do not forget who you are!



Culture shock usually happens at the intersection of collectivist and individualistic values clashing

Here's how you can overcome culture shock:

1. Recognize and acknowledge that you are dealing with difficulty adjusting to your new environment.
2. Study your new country. Be curious of your surroundings. Ask questions about the culture, and share yours too.
3. Learn to manage ambiguity and be patient with yourself. You won't know everything, and the learning curve may not level off for some time.
4. Be mindful of ethnocentric tendencies and suspend ethnocentric evaluations. Thinking that things are better "back home" won't help you transition successfully.



Winning the tug of war of cultures: ours vs. the new

When we're in (cultural) shock, we may find ourselves disoriented between the push and pull of our culture back home, and the new culture we've migrated into. This push and pull may cause us to lose connection with ourselves, our "being", and become a human "doing."

We may find ourselves unable to slow down. Instead, doing more and pushing for more achievements. By forgetting to be in the present in our new home, we may end up becoming a human-doing, continually striving for more and better, and experiencing several episodes of burnout.

As first-generation and children of immigrants, this cycle can be harmful and must be addressed for a healthy balance of doing and being to set in.

Balancing the “doing” and the “being”

Here are some ways to slow down, to balance the “doing” with the “being,” and reach self-actualization:



1. Recognize and acknowledge that there is a clash and that it is impacting you.
2. Tap into a community of immigrants or others having similar struggles to help you decode the experience.
3. Whether or not you have a community, the help of a therapist or coach will help arm you with the proper tools and resources needed to thrive.

The clash between cultural and individualistic cultures can be debilitating and even traumatic. That’s why I created **Thriving Abroad Coaching**. This program will teach you how to show up as your authentic immigrant self, and manage the cultural clashes between both worlds.

Join the program today!

“It is said that the western world is where people come to forget who they are.”

How to find balance as an immigrant

As immigrants, we're told to assimilate. But often times, the target of assimilation isn't clearly defined or is shape-shifting.

One of the best (and easiest) ways I've found to successfully integrate the collectivist and individualistic cultural dynamic, is **contextual code switching**.

This is when you tailor your authentic self to an audience or environment based on the *context*.



For example, you might act as your normal self with family, but become a different (the immigrant) version of yourself with friends, coworkers, etc. This allows you to wholly embrace who you are as an immigrant (your heritage, accent, skin complexion, curves or no curves – all of it!), and the value you bring, coupled with knowledge of the culture and norms in the new country.

Contextual Code Switching is Essential

The ability to contextually code switch is *essential* to building rapport and fostering belonging in your new country. Although there are those who encourage others not to code switch, we all want to belong. Belonging is a fundamental need — we all yearn to be connected, accepted, and valued.

Being able to contextually code switch will allow us to better learn about (and fit in) our new country, while still remaining our authentic selves.

Contextually code switching also allows us to uncover our superpower as a **bridge person**, where we are able to learn about our new culture and bring value to others by sharing valuable insights from ours.



Need Support?

It's important for us to build a support network. Join the **Thriving Abroad Coaching program** to find your strength as a bridge person, and uncover your superpower.

Join the program today

Cultural Homelessness as a Third Culture Person

Although we have a unique position as a bridge person, we may find ourselves feeling lonely and culturally homeless.



As immigrants, we may find ourselves no longer fitting into our birth culture, while still not fitting into the culture of our new country. As we become culturally homeless, we develop into this **Third Culture Person** — a unique experience of housing both cultures within ourselves, while no longer fitting into either of them individually.

For many of us, including myself, this is a difficult process to navigate through. If this is something that you're struggling with, our **Thriving Abroad Coaching program** can help.

Join the program today

Be True to You

Finding belonging isn't a static destination; it's a dynamic, ongoing process where we embrace who we're becoming, while making room to learn and adapt to our new world.

As bridge persons, we have the ability to see things that others do not. We see the value in self-care and achievements, but also recognize our ability to make a difference and have social impact while meeting the needs of others.

Embrace who you are becoming —
embrace your superpower!



Embrace Your Superpower

Schedule a Call

Join the Thriving Abroad Coaching program to learn to address daily challenges as an immigrant, find your superpower as a bridge person, and gain the resilience to thrive abroad!

