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THE ADVENTURES
OF JOHANNA- AN
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT LIVING
IN FREIBURG

ADJUSTING TO SPEAKING A NEW LANGUAGE

NEED HELP ADJUSTING TO SPEAK IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE ?

Adjusting to speaking in a new language doesn't just happen overnight. It will look completely different from one person to another depending on your upbringing, culture, personal preferences, personality type, relationship to the language, and about a million other factors. For some, it might seem simple and they may have little-to-no problem with the adjustment. For others, it may be a bit more difficult. Language learning can also bring up a vast array of emotions. There are times where I felt frustrated because I couldn't express my feelings the way I was used to. Other times I thought I would be judged for my language level, which led me to staying quiet in situations where I would have normally been engaged in a conversation- *which ultimately didn't do me any favors*. It left me feeling disconnected and made me feel like an entirely different person simply because of the lack of understanding and ability to speak. On the other hand, the process of learning languages has brightened my world in more ways than I could have ever imagined. My Italian host mother once told me "every language you learn is another soul" and although it hasn't always been a walk in the park, I've been inspired by the way language-learning can bring color to your life. There are, however, a couple of important mindset shifts we can make to get the magic going!

1 DITCH PERFECTIONISM

The biggest, most important mindset change in language-learning I can give you is to ditch perfectionism. Don't be afraid to sound silly, to make mistakes, or to be misunderstood. Learning a language will require you to become a "child" again in some ways, since you may literally have the vocabulary of a 5 year old. But, I think the most mesmerizing thing about children is their ability to be deeply curious- so try doing the same! I've seen that those who engage in the world with child-like curiosity will not only excel exponentially in LIFE, but also at the very minimum in being able to manage this adjustment. They don't get too worked up about the small stuff, aren't worried about perfection, and are willing to make mistakes. Remember, "Perfectionism magnifies your mistakes and minimizes your progress."

2 ENGAGE IN THE WORLD AROUND YOU

Whether you're on the train, bus, or waiting in line at the grocery store, listen to how locals are speaking. You'll learn little words and be able to expand your vocabulary just by listening! If you're at a bus stop (or anywhere, really) you can try looking around and try to name the things you see in your surroundings.

3 TV & MUSIC

Watch TV and listen to music in the language you're learning. If you're going the TV route consider adding subtitles either in that language or your native language. It can also help to watch your favorite show or movie so you have a general idea of what's going on and can make more of a connection of the words and phrases!



4 MAKE LOCAL FRIENDS

Make friends who speak the language. You can do this by finding either a tandem partner or reaching out to the other people who live around you! If you don't have many people around you, try posting in a Facebook group. Spending time with locals will really speed up the process and give you even more of an incentive to understand the language and culture!

5 EMBRACE YOUR OWN JOURNEY

Don't compare your language-learning journey to anyone else's! I've noticed how some people's ability to adapt quickly into speaking a new language can depend on how they were raised. So for example, if I was encouraged to learn and speak languages from a young age, I may have developed the parts in my brain that enable me to adapt and learn more quickly. For those of you who are learning a new language for the first time, it might be a completely different experience and there's nothing wrong with that! Your upbringing will change your relationship to language-learning immensely, so don't compare your journey to anyone else's!

Play around with with these tips and figure out what works best for YOU! There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to adapting to a new language or culture, so just try some you think fit your personality type. If you find a way to keep your progress consistent and intertwine joy into your learning practice as often as you can. Joy spices things up and when you can learn something with some fun, you'll want to keep coming back for more! Good luck out there, you can do it!

xoxo, Johanna