

## The hardest part of living in Big Apple is language barrier

Ahhh, Minnesota. Land of mosquitoes, summer construction, frigid temperatures and all things snow. Why, oh, why do I love thee?

As a kid, although content and happy, I thought of Minnesota as so dull and unglamorous. There were never any famous movie stars walking the streets and what a blow to our egos

when "Fargo" hit theaters and all of a sudden our "Oh sure, yah, you betcha" accents were the laughingstock of the nation!

OK, so maybe I am being a little dramatic.

This is me: I am a 24-year-old St. Paul native. Born and raised in the true "Minnesota nice" fashion. If ever I slipped, someone was always there to steady my footing. It was wonderful, and it was safe. Unfortunately, it was boring. So, on a quest for self-discovery and independence, I uprooted myself from all things comfortable and moved to what I imagined to be the scariest and greatest place on Earth: New York City.

Here I am working, playing and living in the city that never sleeps in a desperate attempt to prove that if I can make it here, I can make it anywhere.

It's not riding the subway, fighting my way through crowds just to get to work every morning or even my immense fear of being mugged that makes living here tough. It's the everyday, mundane things that New Yorkers are so completely accustomed to that throw me off.

I live in a world where neighborhoods don't exist, at least not in the lemonade-stand, cul-de-sac way I am used to. Garbage piles large enough to hide behind lie on the side of the street along with brutal odors that slyly waft through my apartment window at night.

OK, I'm exaggerating — it's not so bad. Maybe it all just takes some getting used to. But it's not just living in an overpopulated, dirty city that makes the transition hard. It's the language barrier. "Language barrier?" you say, "New Yorkers



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speak English. Minnesotans speak English. What possible language barrier could there be?" Learning Spanish might be easier than learning the language of "New Yawk."

When I first moved here I made the fatal mistake of asking for a pop at a restaurant. The look I received from my waiter was one of complete bewilderment followed by snickers of laughter. He then said to me, "You can't order POT at a restaurant."

Now, come on! If an East Coaster happened upon a restaurant in the Land of 10,000 Lakes and asked for a soda, we would simply ask him what kind he wanted, get it for him and move on with our day. But believe me, now I am fiercely trained to ask for soda, NOT POP, every time I order.

What I am really trying to say is that the culture shock I endured upon moving to this great big city was huge. While it does get easier all the time, I still face challenges every day. But along the way something really exciting is happening. In the midst of job distress, friendship upheavals, guy trauma and overall 20-something life confusion, I really am gaining the independence I set out in search of.

Sometimes it takes putting yourself in a completely foreign setting, totally removed from all those people who always catch you when you fall, to really grow up and become the person you are supposed to be. And here in New York City, which to me is both the scariest and greatest place on Earth, this is exactly what I am attempting to do.

*Kristal, a St. Paul native, has lived in New York City for about a year and a half.*

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