

Cultural Syndromes

Cultural syndromes are clusters of symptoms and attributions that tend to co-occur among individuals in specific cultural groups, communities, or contexts. They are recognized locally as coherent patterns of experience.

CULTURAL SYNDROME	DEFINITION
Ataque de nervios	This disorder is most clearly reported among Latinxs (especially those from the Caribbean) in response to a stressful event. While similar in some ways to a panic attack, it is a distinguishable syndrome, not just a Latin American translation of panic disorder. Symptoms include uncontrollable shouting, crying, trembling, fainting spells, and physical and/or verbal aggression.
Kyâl cap	“Kyâl attacks” or “wind attacks” include symptoms similar to panic attacks, such as dizziness, palpitations, shortness of breath, and cold extremities, as well as other symptoms of anxiety. They also include catastrophic cognitions centered on the concern that a wind like substance may rise in the body, along with blood, and cause a range of serious effects. Kyâl cap is found among Cambodians in the U.S. and Cambodia.
Shenjing shuairuo	A condition characterized by physical and mental fatigue, headaches, difficulty concentrating, dizziness, sleep disturbance, and memory loss. Other symptoms include gastrointestinal problems, sexual dysfunction, irritability, excitability, and autonomic nervous system disturbances. It is typically reported in China.
Susto	A syndrome and a cultural explanation for distress. It is an illness attributed to a frightening event that causes the soul to leave the body and results in unhappiness and sickness. Symptoms often include appetite disturbances, inadequate or excessive sleep, troubled sleep or dreams, sadness, lack of motivation, and feelings of low self-worth or dirtiness. Somatic symptoms include muscle aches and pains, headache, stomachache, and diarrhea. Susto is found in Latin America, but similar etiological beliefs and symptom configurations are found in many parts of the world.
Taijin kyofusho	An intense fear that one’s body, its parts, or its functions displease, embarrass, or offend other people in appearance, odor, facial expressions, or movement. It is included in the official Japanese diagnostic system for mental disorders.

Sources:

Korn, L. E. (2016). *Multicultural counseling workbook: Exercises, worksheets & games to build rapport with diverse clients*. Eau Claire, WI: PESI Publishing and Media.
 American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.