**Family Life**

Lebanese families tend to live in the same area as their relatives. It is not uncommon for families to live in the same building as their relatives. However, most families live by themselves in their own apartment. It is not uncommon for both parents to be professionals and financially responsible for the family in Lebanon, but many families still have a traditional division of labor where the mother is responsible for the housework and the father supports the family financially. In Lebanese families, the father is seen as the head of the family and the authority figure, and all major household decisions are typically made after his approval.

Though having a housekeeper or hired help is not uncommon in Lebanon, most household chores and upkeep are delegated to the mother if there is no hired help. Usually mothers cook the meals and female teens start to learn to cook at a certain age, but not in all families. Male teenagers are not expected to cook for themselves or for their families. While all efforts are made to have meals eaten all together as a family in Lebanon, from time to time people will eat separately to accommodate a busy schedule.

Teen Life: Siblings usually share clothing, books, and accessories, and they usually don't ask first before using them unless they think the other might need it. In Lebanon, children are expected to act formally around their grandparents and parents. Lebanese students tend to rely heavily on their parents for support and direction.

Responsibilities: Lebanese families spend a lot of time together and it is rare to spend time by one's self. Some students have felt lonely at times when members of their host family have their “own” time. Allowances may be in daily or weekly sums, but teenagers are not typically expected to budget for the clothes they want to buy or for the activities in which they want to participate. Teens are also expected to take responsibility for their transportation if they are traveling within their own neighborhood. However, if they are going somewhere outside their neighborhood, parents prefer to drop their child off themselves. Additionally, it is common for teenagers to get summer jobs and to travel to their jobs using public transportation.

Parental Involvement: In Lebanon, children know more than their parents about the internet and its usage, hence most parents do not monitor what their children are doing online. Teens are not accustomed to having their internet usage monitored either with regards to time or website restrictions. Parents in Lebanon are not always in direct contact with their children’s schools, and some schools might not even require regular teacher meetings. However, the student's report card needs to be signed by their parents to confirm that they have received it. In addition, if a student has failed a class, they cannot receive their report card unless his/her parents visit the school.

Pets: For most Muslim families, pets, especially dogs, are not allowed in the house, although cats may be allowed. A common belief among many Muslims is that dogs are considered “unclean,” and therefore if a Muslim touches a dog before prayer, he/she must perform ablution again before praying. Also, if a dog was in a certain area of the house, it is thought that the person cannot pray in that area, as it would be considered unclean. For Christian families, the decision of having dogs or cats in the house is not based on religious reasons, however they would likely keep animals outside the house, as pets are not common.

**Personal Interactions**

**Mixed Gender Socializing:** In Lebanon, teenagers have mixed-gender groups of friends and also socialize one-on-one with the opposite gender. Lebanese students do have friends from school and activities, but a vital support group that all teenagers develop throughout their life is from their extended family and neighborhood friends. People are very sociable and tend to live in the same place throughout their lives, so everyone ends up knowing their neighbors well.

**Friendships:** In Lebanon, friendship means having someone who is always there for you. Lebanese tend to have their “school friends” and their “neighborhood friends.” Lebanese people tend to have stronger relationships with their neighborhood friends that last their lifetime, while school friends are there for them mainly during school hours. Lebanese teenagers tend to socialize in groups as a tight-knit community. Additionally, Lebanese students tend to be generous with their friends. They may buy things or insist on paying, as it is traditional in Lebanese culture. While it may be a polite gesture, it is expected that the other party will either pay for themselves through insisting or that they will pay for the other the next time they go out (also after insisting).

**Communication Styles:** In Lebanon, the communication style depends upon what is being discussed. For example, students may be very direct when talking about their day and their friends, but if they become involved in a romantic relationship, they will most likely not talk to their parents about it. This can also depend on whether the parents are financially stable and educated.

**Eye Contact:** Eye contact is important in Lebanon as a way of showing respect.

**Cultural Norms:** While the cultural norm in Lebanon would be that it is unacceptable to show negative emotions in public or in front of the family, many teenagers still show their emotions. They may do so more with their peers than with their family, but it definitely does happen at home, too. However, teenagers do show a lot of respect towards adults and the elderly. Some Lebanese teenagers are accustomed to having their own personal space both in terms of interaction and physical space. Depending on the educational and financial background of the family, parents may interfere in all of the teenagers’ activities. On the other hand, some parents are open-minded and give their children more space. Additionally, people in Lebanon are generally not very punctual. As Lebanese are very sociable, it is not considered rude to talk to someone you don't know.
School

**Classes:** In Lebanon, students do not choose their school subjects, as each grade level has specific classes that all registered students are required to take. Students generally have six to seven classes per day, five days a week; throughout the school year, each student takes 10 or 11 subjects. Students are usually at school for six to seven hours per day, with each subject being taught daily for around 45 minutes. Sometimes students have two sessions of the same subject on the same day.

Grades are equally weighted between performance on assignments and exams. Students are usually assigned homework on each school day of the week, and student participation in class discussion is encouraged. Formatting of exams varies between essays, multiple choice, and short answers based on the teacher's preference. Students also stay in the same classroom all day while teachers rotate to each room. While most schools in Lebanon are co-ed, some public and private schools are for boys or girls only.

**School Relationships:** Lebanese students address their teacher with a title before the teacher's first or last name; for example: "Mr. Doe," "Mr. John," or simply "teacher."

**Extracurricular Activities:** Some private schools offer extracurricular activities and clubs; however, the majority of schools in Lebanon do not. The concept of extracurricular activities is not very common among Lebanese families. When students do participate in any activities, parents are usually involved to a very high extent. In most cases, the parents choose the activities in which their child will participate, like music and some sports.

**School Rules and Attire:** Lebanese high schools do not allow use of cell phones during classes. If a student is caught using their cell phone, their phone is usually taken away and given back at the end of the day. If students get into a fight, they are sent to the principal's office and their parents are called. They can be suspended for a few days or up to a week, depending on the principal's discretion. If a student is caught cheating, they are usually punished with detention and their parents are called.

Most schools have a uniform for students and most Lebanese teenagers dress informally outside of school. The school uniform differs from one school to another, however each school's uniform will include the school's logo. Usually, the uniform consists of long pants and a blouse; girls also have the option of wearing a skirt.

**Returning from Exchange:** Once the students return to their country, they need to take their U.S. transcripts to the Lebanese Ministry of Education to receive a certification of equivalence to have the year abroad count towards their educational progress. Most students have to catch up on several subjects over the summer that they may not have covered while being in the U.S., such as Arabic and science classes.

Food and Culture

**Religion:** Students of all religions generally attend regular religious services with their entire family as it is seen as a community activity. However, attendance at religious ceremonies or services are more often and consistent in rural areas.

**Holidays:** All national and religious holidays are celebrated as a national day off if they fall on a weekday. National holidays include Labor Day, South Liberation Day, New Year, and Independence Day. Christian holidays include Christmas, Armenian Christmas (orthodox), Annunciation Day, All Saints Day, Easter, and Assumption of Virgin Mary Day. Christmas and Armenian Christmas are celebrated indoors with family and friends. Muslim holidays include Eid al-Fitr and Ramadan. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for 30 days; families usually invite family and friends to break their fast together. Families also help poor people and orphans during this time. Eid al-Fitr occurs at the end of 30 days of fasting during Ramadan, usually for 3 days. Eid al-Fitr begins with prayers, followed by visiting the cemeteries of their relatives and offering flowers, gathering for lunch, and then visiting relatives and friends. Presents are optional.

**Guest Culture:** Offering food and drink to a guest is customary in Lebanon. If the guest declines, a Lebanese person will insist that the guest eats or drinks something. As hospitality is important for Lebanese, it is rude not to accept the offer.

**Lunch and Diets:** Usually, the student's parents pack a cold sandwich and fruit for their children to have for lunch before coming back home and having a proper lunch. It is also normal for children to get "lunch money" to buy snacks while at school or after school. Most schools do not have vending machines.

Muslims are not allowed to eat pork for religious reasons; additionally, Muslims only eat halal meats. As for eating habits, the most important meal of the day in Lebanon is lunch, which takes place around 2:00pm; often the family gathers together to eat lunch. While previously unpopular, "fad diets" are becoming more common in Lebanon.

**Personal Hygiene:**

Lebanese teenagers generally take a quick shower once a day and sometimes twice if they are involved in physical activities. In general, Lebanese students keep bathrooms clean, however many homes have household help who do this. Muslim students who pray five times a day perform a ritual ablution before each prayer time. It is generally thought to be unclean in Lebanon to wear the same clothes two days in a row. If the clothes are still clean they will wear them twice, but not necessarily two days in a row. Most of the Lebanese teenagers do not change clothes upon returning home.