

Returning STMer

Stage One

SEND International Materials



Moving On

Complete the following exercise with your own words *before* leaving your country or field. You may write whatever comes to your mind.



Leaving

Write one word here that describes how you feel about leaving. Be prepared to share this word at your debrief meeting with your coach

1. When I think of leaving, I feel....
2. My experience here has been.....
3. For me, _____ means....
(name of country/people group)
4. The people I will miss are.....
5. The things that I will miss are.....
6. The things I will be happy to leave behind are....
7. When leaving a place I usually.....
8. The easiest point of leaving for me will be.....
9. Before I leave I really want to.....
10. I feel that my goals/expectations have been.....
11. The most stressful part of leaving will be.....

Expectations

12. I expect that the process of returning will be.....
13. I expect the reception from my family will be.....
14. I expect the reception from my church will be.....
15. I expect the reception from my friends will be....



16. I think my church will expect me to....
17. I think my family will expect me to....
18. I think my friends at home will expect me to....
19. I think my friends at home will expect me to **be**....
20. For a career, I hope to....

If this does not work out, I will.....

Returning

Write one word here that describes how you feel about returning home. Be prepared to share this word at your debrief meeting with your coach_____.

21. When I think of returning home, I feel....
22. I will be going back to.....
23. Regarding money, I will be...
24. Going back will enable me to....
25. I think the hardest part of going back for me will be...
26. I think the easiest part of going back for me will be...
27. I am really looking forward to...

If your family is here with you

28. When I talk to my spouse about leaving he/she....
29. When I talk to my children about leaving they....
30. I think that for my spouse leaving will be....

Thanks to Lisa-Espineli-Chinn, Interaction, Inc.

Returning STMer

Stage Two

SEND International Materials



Reunion Party

A Reunion Party is usually the most fun and most beneficial if it also is scheduled within two weeks after your return. The purpose of this is to have fun, and be with your family, friends, and supporters. Show some pictures, share some stories, serve some of the foods you ate in-country...but keep it celebratory! Celebrate what God did and what He allowed you to do and learn.



Reporting to Your Church or Group

It is important that the people who supported you in prayer and giving receive a report about your trip. You are not only sharing what God has done in you as an individual, but also how He used you on your trip. And, reporting back gives you an opportunity to educate people on the area of the world you visited.

If you are from a church, you will need to approach the appropriate person as to when you can report. **It is best to report within the first two weeks of the return.**

The overall goal of your report is to give as complete a picture of your trip as you can, including an overview of the country or culture, the host missionary(s), the national church, the ministry you engaged in, and the impact the trip had on you.

The following are suggestions to include in your report to your church or group:

1. **PowerPoint Presentation:** A PowerPoint presentation is an effective tool in communicating a glimpse of your trip. Sometimes it is best to set the show to music or pre-record the narration to keep from running too long.
2. **Testimony:** Write out what you want to say. Try to find a variety of experiences to be shared to give a broad picture.
3. **Music:** If you are musical, sing some of the songs you learned in the language. Also sing English songs that were meaningful on the trip.
4. **Appreciation:** Express appreciation to the group or congregation for their prayers and financial support.
5. **Prayer:** Provide the congregation or group with prayer requests for the field and for yourself. You could use a flyer, overhead, or PowerPoint slide. Make it legible. Maybe divide into small groups for a mini “concert of prayer.”
6. **Display:** Set up a display table where people could get further information and see more pictures, artifacts from the culture, etc.

The “**Telling Your Story**” document starting on the next page has some great tips to help you with this event.



Telling Your Story



You've just returned from a mission trip.

You can't wait to get home to your family, church, and friends to tell them how wonderfully God has worked in and through your life.



How can you tell your story in the most effective way?

Better, how can you convey what is in your heart to the hearts of your listeners?

Let's think about that . . .



Telling Your Story

Reporting about your mission trip to family, church, friends



So, How Was Your Trip? or What's it like in _____?

These questions are hard to answer—what do you say?

Either you say too much—



And overwhelm your audience!

Or, you say to



little: **“It was great!”**



And leave your audience with nothing!

And, the reality is, no matter how much you are dying to share your story, most people aren't dying to hear your story—in fact, some would rather die than listen to a story about missions!

You will probably be met by one of three responses:

- moderate enthusiasm,**
- feigned curiosity, or**
- down-right disinterest.**



Few people have had an experience like yours.

They have no point of reference for understanding. Their concept of a missionary may be of someone cutting their way through the jungle wearing a pith helmet and carrying a Bible.

One way to determine your listener's level of interest and to help them relate to your experience is to do a little fishing:





Share your story with a “hook, line, and sinker.”



Hook

Start with a "hook," a sentence or two just to test the waters to see if their curiosity is biting. “I could not believe people with so little could be so happy!” “I’ve never felt so exhausted and so energized at the same time!” Make a provocative, open-ended statement and watch how the other person responds. Do they show any signs of wanting more? If so, and the situation and time allow, move on to a line.



Line

A “line” is a one to two minute story about your experience. By far, people relate best to stories. Have several one to two minutes stories ready to share about events or people from your trip. These stories should relate to, or expand upon, what you said in your “hook.” It is best to write out some notes about those people and events so that you are ready at a moment's notice to share a simple, short story. Another very important thing to remember is that not-yet-believers in Jesus might be interested too. Be ready to tie your experience to the Good News. “I saw Jesus Christ change people’s lives from the inside out.”



Sinker

There will be a few people who will be touched by your stories and will have a genuine interest in hearing more. Be prepared to invite these people to coffee, or lunch, or a walk in the park. Let the truths about God’s love for lost people of every tongue, tribe, and nation sink in deeply as you share more completely about your mission trip experiences. Reel them in! You were caught into missions by someone. You could be this person's personal contact that God uses to draws them further into being a world Christian.

As you share your experience you will be fishing for “fishers of men.”



The foundation of your “fishing trip” is your stories—
So let’s look at how to develop and tell a good story!

A. What makes you smile—or laugh, or cry, or ... ?

1. When you think back about your experience, what are the memories that provoke an emotional response in you?
2. Where are you in that memory?
3. What/who are you thinking about?
4. Describe one person, event, or thing from your recent mission trip which touches you emotionally.
5. This is the heart of what you want to share with others—if it touches your heart it will touch the hearts of your listeners.



B. How can you share this with your friends?

1. Many (most?) people don’t know that they want to hear your stories.



- a. Many missionaries are just plain **boorring**.

- 1) You are following in the footsteps of those who have performed poorly in the past.
- 2) You are also setting the stage for those who come after you.

2. Two possibilities . . .

Possible conversation #1...

Possible conversation #2...



C. Tips for telling your story.

1. Tell a story around one particular real person you met or one genuine event in which you participated.
 - a. Write out your story word for word beforehand.
 - b. Time your story to be between one and two minutes in length.
 - c. **Practice** your story, especially your timing.
 - d. Use a good quality photo to go along with the story.
 - 1) Simple composition;
 - 2) People-oriented;
 - 3) Good quality;
 - 4) The end of your verbal story should correspond to the focus of your photo.



2. When you are done with your story, **stop**.
3. Do not continue without the person's invitation.
4. If the listener asks for more, continue with similar short stories, combined with photos.



D. General guidelines for telling your story to larger groups.

1. Determine your purpose.
 - a. What message do you want to leave in the hearts and minds of your listeners?
 - 1) Don't try to preach a Bible message;
 - 2) Don't force a spiritual lesson on your audience, except as you share what God taught you.
 - 3) **Allow the audience to feel what you feel and to catch your vision.**
 - b. Plan a series of stories which will add up to your intended purpose.
 - c. Be sure your last story leads your audience to your purpose.
 - 1) Don't leave the Q&A time for the last thing you do!
 - a) An off-track question can leave your audience thinking about the answer to that question instead of your main point.
 - 2) After Q&A allow time for your final story that reinforces your purpose!





2. Determine your time limit.

- a. Plan your stories to fill, but not overflow, this time limit.
- b. practice, practice, practice, practice

3. Use your photos in a PowerPoint presentation.

- a. Use a photo as background to a story rather than as a primary means of making a point.
- b. Prepare one photo to go along with each story or segment.
 - 1) Put the photo on the screen at the beginning of the story.
 - 2) Ignore it until the end of the story when you remove it from the screen.

c. *Dos and don'ts:*

Do not:

- a) refer directly to the photo or projector
- b) point out details within the photo
- c) fiddle with it
- d) apologize for it
- e) turn around and talk directly to the screen or photo

Do:

- a) use good quality photographs for your PowerPoint
- b) use photos with simple composition and subject
- c) use photos which complement your story without further explanation
- d. Where do you find good pictures for your PowerPoint?
 - 1) Your own photos would be best.
 - 2) Get photos from your teammates on the field.
 - 3) Check with SEND's media department for file photos.

This emphasizes the importance of writing out and practicing the stories



E. Other venues for telling your story.

1. Church
 - a. Ask your pastor or other church leader for an opportunity to share with the entire congregation.
 - b. Use whatever time you have to share your vision.
2. Sunday School or other small groups in your church
 - a. Ask the Sunday School superintendent or small group coordinator for an opportunity to share with the entire group, or in individual departments or classes.
 - b. If you have a special relationship with any particular class, group, or teacher, ask directly for an opportunity.
 - c. Don't neglect the younger or older classes.
 - 1) The younger kids will be the missionaries of tomorrow –if you and others inspire them.
 - 2) The older people are the pray-ers of the church – they can help you more than you will help them.



3. College or University
 - a. Look for opportunities to share with whatever groups might be at your college or university.
4. Small Groups
 - a. Create or find your own groups

F. Why are you telling your story over and over again?

You might start to feel weary in telling the same story(s) again and again—but remember:

1. Many people participated in those stories from a distance by supporting you with prayer and financial help. They need to hear how God used their participation.
2. Your stories are the account of how God met and used you in special circumstances.
3. Repeating your stories will drive them deeper into your own heart.
4. Others might need to learn from the lessons of your stories.
5. You have a unique opportunity to inspire others to imitate your obedience in serving Christ.

FOR MORE IDEAS ON SHARING YOUR STORY SEE THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE,

“I’m Home! Creative Communication Techniques”



Selected Resources for the Missionary Speaker¹

Frank, Milo O. *How to Get Your Point Across in 30 Seconds -- or Less.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Grant, Reg and John Reed. *Telling Stories to Touch the Heart.* Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990.

Miller, Calvin. *The Empowered Communicator.* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

¹



I'm Home! Creative Communication Techniques

Good-byes are fresh. Tears from telling your new friends you hope to see them again are tucked behind your eyes. The excitement of memories, the pictures of experiences, and the new lessons you have learned are racing through your mind. There is much to tell and now you're home. What do you share? How do you communicate what you have been through?

We each desire to express our mission experience with others. We want people to grasp what we are communicating. The disappointment of discovering that not all people are interested in our venture is disheartening for many returning laborers. With this combination of desire and potential disappointment, it is important for short-termers to know how to communicate their experience.

This article addresses the role sharing your story has for you and others. It also discusses why it is important to process what you are going to share and gives creative ways in which to communicate to individuals and groups.

Why it is Important to Share your Experience

To tell about a mission trip is beneficial for both the one sharing and the listener. For you, the returning missionary, this exercise solidifies the lessons learned, the vision that has been built, and aids you in processing the pleasant as well as the difficult parts of the trip. For the listener, it is often God's tool for challenging them to be involved in the Great Commission.

As a returning missionary you assume the role of a vision builder when you share your experience. Each lesson you learned potentially becomes a challenging lesson for your listener. Each time you speak of God's provisions, it can be used to bring the listener into a closer relationship with God. You become a teacher of the joys of missions, and a challenger for world evangelization, when you express the pleasures and hurts of your experience. It is important to take the time to process which aspects of your trip you want to share and how.

As a returning missionary you assume the role of a vision builder when you share your experience.

As you review the creative communication techniques below, keep in mind the different audiences to which they can be applied. These techniques are designed to facilitate your spiritual growth and to be used to challenge others.



Creative Techniques for Sharing Your Story

Method 1 – “Journal Segmenting”

The process of sharing your story begins before your arrival home. The preparation time and the trip are often bursting with wonderful nuggets of God’s faithfulness. A means of capturing those moments is through journaling. When you journal remember that you may want to share these experiences with others. Journal more than events. Record your impressions, thoughts, and feelings. This process helps you see God working in your life and will allow you to communicate the trip with clarity and depth.



Journal Segmenting involves using parts of your written memories to communicate concise aspects of the trip. There are numerous ways to use journal segmenting to tell your story. One mission trip participant took paragraphs from his first impressions of the country, his ministry experience, and his feelings during his departure and placed them in a letter. He used this as his follow-up letter to all his prayer and financial supporters. Another stood before his sending church reading a series of entries laced strategically together. This kept him from stumbling and kept his testimony concise.

Another creative means for using your journal is in discussions with a leader or pastor. When the “how was your trip” question comes, it becomes easy to say, “I’d like to read one entry that captures the trip for me.” This allows you to clearly communicate a specific part of your trip, shows you are respectful of the leader’s time, and you can leave a copy of the entry for them to read again. *Using a journal segment in this way can often leave the listener wanting more.*

Method 2 – “Storytelling”

Not all personality types enjoy journaling. Others can communicate best through telling a story. *Storytelling* is the process of identifying one aspect of a trip and determining how to communicate it with clarity. It can be used with an individual or an audience. Effective storytelling is similar to effective journaling. It is important to share the facts of the event as well as your personal impressions, feelings, and thoughts. When choosing a specific story, think of special people like a faithful national worker who inspired you to greater service. Think of a unique event. Some short-term missionaries in Bulgaria prayed for God to restore power, which had failed in the middle of an evangelistic outreach. He did so immediately and the life of that meeting is impressed in their memories forever.



Think of an emotionally-charged scene like the natural beauty of the country or the stark reality of the slums in a poverty-stricken area. As you think of these things, identify one or two mental pictures and build a story around them.

No matter what your specific story is, think through it before you share it so that the effectiveness of it will be multiplied. Remember to keep it concise.

Method 3 – “Photos and PowerPoint Slides”

Photos and slides don't have to be boring! People enjoy seeing memories of a trip captured digitally. What makes them boring is how the tool is used. The key to effective use of pictures is to use them to relay a specific event.

Photos and slides don't have to be boring!

Take your photos and place them neatly in an album (either in hardcopy prints or on your device). Mark the pictures that relate to the story or journal entry you are going to share. As you tell your story flip to those specific photos. When your story is finished the listener might want to investigate the remaining photos and their questions will come naturally. Use your story and initial photos as bait to draw them into your experience. Slides in a PowerPoint can be used similarly. Select an overview segment of your slides to present. Stop on one or two to tell a specific story. Most audiences will slow you down for more information if you keep the pace of the slides moving.

Using Creative Communication Techniques

The above techniques may seem basic, yet, few returning missionaries implement them. If these simple tools are used, the interest in missions would increase among pastors and lay people because they would hear specific stories about God's faithfulness and how the mission trip experience is used to change lives.

Remember the key to using these techniques is to be specific and concise, always leaving your listener wanting more. Many church leaders don't meet with returning missionaries because they take too much of their time. Surprise your pastor or church mission leader by coming in with one specific story and lesson learned. Be prepared with a journal entry or pictures and leave him/her wanting more! God is in the discipling business. Your mission trip experience is one of His tools for discipling you. You sharing your experience through your journal, stories and pictures is one of His tools for discipling others. Take the time to prepare what and how you are going to communicate.

*Thanks to Larry Ragan, CultureLink, [Help! I'm Going a Short Term Trip!](#)
Edited by Don Johnson, SEND International*

Returning STMer

Stage Three

SEND International Materials

REENTRY FACTS

From an article by Randy Friesen
Adapted by Don Johnson*

THE BAD NEWS:

#1

DECLINE IN SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

A majority of returning mission trip participants experience a significant decline in the disciplines of prayer and Bible study in the year following their mission trip. Before and during the trip the personal practice of spiritual disciplines increases, but the removal of daily accountability structures and supportive relationships seems to contribute to a decline. It seems that many may go on a “spiritual vacation” when they return home.

#2

DECLINE IN LOCAL CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

Many participants experience a significant decline in their relationship with their home church, starting while they are on the mission trip and continuing during the first year back home. This could be related to short-termers who return from their trip to go off to school away from home, or it could be that they no longer feel understood by their local church.

#3

DECLINE IN PERSONAL PURITY

According to research, many participants who go on a mission trip experience a significant decline in personal purity while on their trip and during the first year back home after the trip. This may relate directly to the declines in spiritual disciplines and local church accountability relationships, or could be a reaction to all the changes in status and relationships, both on and off the field.

#4

REGRESSION IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

After being back home for one year, most short-termers regress in many of the areas of growth they experienced as a result of their trip—often to levels that are lower than before the trip. Declines are seen in the areas of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. First time mission trip participants are especially vulnerable to this regression in spiritual growth.

BUT IT WON'T HAPPEN TO ME!!!

You might or might not be among those in the category of “many participants” who experience these negative results in your life after your mission trip experience. But a large percentage of returning short-termers do! And remember, the ones that experienced these negative results were committed believers who set out to serve the Lord cross-culturally in obedience to His call.

Just like you!

The good news is that there are some mitigating factors that can increase the probability that you will not experience these declines, and will, in fact, thrive in your spiritual life as a result of your mission trip. Let's take a look at those factors and see how many apply to you.

THE GOOD NEWS:

#1

PRE-FIELD DISCIPLESHIP INCREASES POSITIVE CHANGE

If you received some discipleship training in personal spiritual growth, and in preparation for ministry cross-culturally before your trip, you are more likely to experience and retain positive change in your beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. You will be more likely to see growth in your prayer life, Bible study, relationship to church and Christian community, and evangelism.

#2

THE LONGER THE TRIP, THE MORE LASTING THE CHANGE

Participants who go on a mission trip lasting several months or more are less likely to experience declines in spiritual growth than those whose trips last only a few days or weeks.

#3

MINISTERING CROSS-CULTURALLY RESULTS IN GREATER GROWTH

When comparing the results in the lives of mission trip participants who serve cross-culturally with those who work within their own culture, the cross-cultural experience tends to produce greater and more lasting spiritual growth in the lives of the participants.

#4

TEAMS CREATE MORE GROWTH

Those who trained, traveled, and served with a group demonstrated higher growth results. They had a safe group to share any struggles with while on the field and after returning. Individuals who travel alone can experience some of those benefits if they connect with other expatriates on the field that they can be totally transparent with as they work through issues.

#5

REPEAT MISSION TRIP PARTICIPANTS HAVE HIGHER GROWTH RETENTION

Mission trip alumni tend to experience higher growth rates and retain that growth longer. Repeat participants show higher positive change in the areas of prayer, purity, stewardship of time, and teamwork.

#6

SUPPORTIVE FAMILIES HELP IMPROVE POSITIVE GROWTH

Those short-termers who view their families as supportive of their trip are more likely to exhibit positive change in the areas of evangelism, teamwork, their understanding of the global Church, and other relational concepts.

#7**STRONG CHURCH SUPPORT IMPROVES MORAL PURITY**

Mission trip participants who view their home church as supportive of their short-term mission experience are less likely to experience a significant decline in their personal moral purity.

#8**RELATIONALLY FOCUSED TRIP INCREASES POSITIVE IMPACT**

Mission trips that are relationally-focused as opposed to service-focused result in greater growth and increased retention of that growth.

#9**BEING A WOMAN RESULTS IN GREATER SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Women report greater levels of spiritual growth as a result of a trip than men do. They grow more than men in the areas of their identity in Christ and their value of work. They exhibit positive change in their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Men tend to regress more than women, particularly in the areas of personal purity and value of other cultures.

#10**OPENNESS TO FUTURE MISSION WORK INCREASES POSITIVE CHANGE**

Those short-termers who are interested in future full-time mission work experience significantly higher growth rates than those who have no future interest in mission work. They exhibit growth in worship, attitude towards family, teamwork, identity in Christ, evangelism, compassion, and concern for global issues.

#11**POST-FIELD DEBRIEF MITIGATES SPIRITUAL DECLINE**

Having a thorough debriefing upon returning from a mission trip allows participants the opportunity to work through unresolved field issues and allows them the chance to explore how God has changed them. This proactive step minimizes the factors that could lead to spiritual decline.

SO WHAT ABOUT YOU????

How do you measure up against the statistics? Do you have enough mitigating factors in your life to keep you from spiritual decline? If not, how will you deal with that? If so, how will you make sure to maximize their effect?

** Friesen, R. (October 2005). The long-term impact of short-term missions. In L. Fortunak & A. Moreau (Eds.) Engaging the church: Analyzing the canvas of short-term missions (pp. 177-184). Wheaton, IL: EMIS.*

Tips for Entering Life Back Home

1. DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM OTHERS

You may find people are too busy to listen to you (even your family). Share a little with them at first. Pick a quick story. People do not want to hear everything. Let people draw you out. Remember they had their own experiences while you were gone, so listen to them, too.

2. BE CAREFUL ABOUT VALUE JUDGMENTS

Do not argue with people about values. Both of you are right. Upon your return, you may tend to be judgmental about the values in your culture and even the Christian culture. We all need to evaluate our values but it is not up to us to determine other people's convictions. The Holy Spirit lays claim to that job.

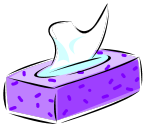
3. DON'T BE CRITICAL OF OTHERS' SPIRITUALITY

God is in the business of teaching all of us but He is not teaching all of us at the same rate or the same things. Be patient with others in their growth and learning as God is patient with you.

4. BE PREPARED FOR NOSTALGIA

Sometimes you may long to be back in the country where you have served. You may miss your national friends and you may even miss your teammates you served with on the field! Don't be surprised at this nostalgia. Get out your pictures, call a friend and go to the Lord with your feelings.

5. DON'T BE SURPRISED AT A LITTLE BIT OF DEPRESSION



When the nostalgia sets in, a little depression may follow. Entrust these feelings to the Lord.

Allow Him to carry the burden for the ones you left behind and the longing for the community of the team. Call a teammate of your same gender and talk to him or her. Others go through it too.

But if your feelings of depression start to interfere with your normal daily life seek out a trained Christian counselor right away!

6. TRY TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH ONE OR TWO INDIVIDUALS YOU MET ON THE FIELD

Receiving a letter from the field may help your feelings of nostalgia, or depression. Your national friends will love to hear from you as well.

7. BE CAREFUL ABOUT NEGATIVE REPORTING

Sometimes when you return from the field, if any grievances occurred, they are still fresh. Be careful not to report negatively about your experiences. Share what God taught you about Himself and yourself through the tough times. You may regret negative reporting later as the Lord heals and reconciles whatever happened. That doesn't mean you need to put a positive spin on everything, but just don't come back as a "whiner."

8. CONTACT YOUR PRAYER PARTNERS AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS

These are the people who are going to be most interested in your trip. They have invested in you and will be looking for some report. Thank them for their prayer and financial support. Ask them to continue to pray for your readjustment.

9. DEVELOP SOME REALISTIC PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR YOURSELF

Avoid making unreasonable demands on yourself like "I'm going to pray an hour a day for those nationals and missionaries!" Think through some realistic ways of integrating your experiences into your daily routine and life at home.

Possible Effects of Cross-cultural Service

1. You may have a new viewpoint.

You may see the world as a place that is very different from your home but one that is in greater need. Your worldview may be broadened.

2. You may have a new conviction.

You may be convicted about things related to your own country. You may have a sense of pride about some things about your own country. You may have a deeper burden for other countries and peoples.

3. You may have some new values.

You may be more critical of your values and the values of others at home. Your values may be taking on new shapes and forms.

4. You may have a new understanding.

You now may understand more about what is Biblical versus what is cultural.



5. You may have a bigger view of the forest.

You may now understand things that are common to man, i.e. government, the sin of man, male and female differences, etc.

6. You may have a bit of a new personality.

You may have been a very out-going person and now you are calmer or sensitive to things you weren't before. You may have been a very quiet or shy person and have now become more confident.

Reentry Fantasies

The Top Ten Fantasies of Returning Mission Trip Participants

Written by Larry Ragan – CultureLink

Adapted by Don Johnson – SEND International

#10—I Will Write Everyone I Met!

This is a feeling that quickly disappears when home. Do stay in touch with one or two people. This communication will help you adjust to being home, plus it keeps your new vision alive.

#9—People are Dying to Hear About My Trip!

Some people would rather die than hear about your trip. Very few people want all the details. Prepare a specific story about a person or lesson learned. Share this clearly and briefly. Leave them wanting more.

#8—I Will Be Glad to be Home!

Of course there are things you will have missed. However, you may experience some depression. Recognize this is a part of reentry. Talk to others about how you feel and begin applying this experience to your life as quickly as possible.

#7—I Have a New Purpose!

You could return with new vision in life and may find your home, job, and activities purposeless. Ask God how you can enhance the activities in which you are involved and bring His purpose into them.

#6—I am Truly Spiritual!

Watch out, this fantasy can cause you to judge, judge, judge and judge! Remember those you are returning to have not had the experience you have. Share what you learned and let God work in them.

#5—I Am Going to Sell All my Things!

This is a *reaction* fantasy. God may want you to adjust your lifestyle for His purposes, however, He doesn't call you to prove something to Him. Ask God to guide you in the areas you need to change.

#4—I am now a Missions Expert!

Sometimes we come back thinking that now we understand the Host Culture and are an expert on the country and its cultural practices. You just experienced the tip of the iceberg in learning about culture. Be careful in your reporting to share what you have learned, but still be a learner.

#3—I Have Fulfilled my Missions Responsibility!

Some people are glad to be back and think they can check the “missions thing” off their list. If you stay open with God He will use the experience for His purposes for years to come. Allow your experience to change you.

#2—I am Going to be a Career Missionary!

This is a fantasy which could become a reality! If you have this idea, don't become discouraged if it seems unattainable. Seek advice and counsel, and move toward this one step at a time. Tell your mission coach about your thinking.

#1—I Will Never Be the Same!

This is *not* a fantasy! You will never be the same. How much you allow the cross-cultural experience to affect you, either positively or negatively, is up to you!

Reentry Phases

Reentry is similar to culture shock. Sometimes it is called reverse culture shock. In reentry, you may feel "out of balance." You are not the same as when you left so there are some adjustments. It is normal for people to go through some type of reentry after an overseas experience. The following information is given in case you should experience any of them.

Options for Coping with Reentry Stress

There are different ways of coping with reentry adjustments that you may go through after returning from a mission trip. Four options of coping are explained below. You may find yourself coping one way at one time and another way at another time, or you may find yourself going through them all before you feel adjusted.

You have options in how you respond to your mission trip.

Initial return: Fun (honeymoon)



Most people feel some excitement upon returning. It is exciting to see friends, family, familiar food, etc. You have so much to tell and say.

But once you are back home, you may find yourself struggling. The following are some options you may experience in Reentry adjustments.

Option 1: Isolate (be alienated)

After a while, you may begin to feel like a "fish out of water". You may find yourself withdrawing from others--reading books, writing letters, not socializing with friends and family. You may find yourself feeling a strong guilt over your home culture's affluence and materialism. You may be unaware of other alternatives to impact your home culture or church.

Suggestion: You need someone who has been through Reentry stress to help in understanding the transition process and exploring options. Contact your mission coach or your church.



Option II: Agitate (be angry)



This is where you may find yourself angry—angry at your culture, your friends, your family, and your church. No one understands you. Everyone is different from before and even his or her lifestyle or values are bad. You may find yourself mocking them or agitating them. They appear foolish in what they do and what they value.

**No one
understands!**

Suggestion: You need to seek support from someone who has been through reentry stress but who also can help you understand how to soften your spirit and heart. Again, your church or mission coach is a good option. A former missionary would understand and be very helpful.

Option III: Accommodate (be apathetic)

This is where you go back to life as it always had been and ignore the changes and struggles you are going through. You resume life as if nothing happened—you imitate those around you who didn't have a cross-cultural mission experience. You may be afraid of the repercussions of being different or of standing on any new convictions.



Suggestion: You need to be with compassionate and missions-minded people who can assist you in sorting out your mission trip experience. As suggested before, go to your mission coach or church.

The Final Option - Integrate (be active)



This is the optimal way of coping and ultimately the final option for you to reenter and be well-adjusted. You relate back with the home culture in a way that does not compromise or negate your new values or lessons learned from the mission trip experience. You continue to learn while creating a unique lifestyle, incorporating the old and new.

Suggestion: Seek like-minded people to foster your integration. Then go and share what you've learned with those who are still struggling in the other three options.

More Practical Suggestions:

1. Find other returnees with whom you can share and have fellowship. Discuss the needs of the world and pray for them. Learn to think globally.
2. Give yourself time to readjust; be patient with yourself and with others.
3. Recognize and accept which transition stage or option you are going through, and remember that "reverse culture shock" or "reentry stress" is a normal part of the process of returning home.
4. Have a good sense of humor.
5. Let your reentry work for you; use it as a growing process to continue learning about yourself.
6. Appreciate the opportunity you had to minister cross-culturally.
7. Review the most significant changes you have undergone and the implications of those changes.
8. Consciously apply your theology of culture (seeing both patterns of exploitation and idolatry and patterns of loveliness and kindness) to your home culture.
9. Cultivate friendships with people from the region where you visited, such as international students, businessmen, or immigrants.
10. Help your friends and church know what questions to ask you. Try to look at your ministry from their context and tie your concerns to their values.
11. Help your church figure out where to use you in an ongoing way. Analyze their ministries and your gifts, and then make a couple of proposals to the church as to how you could serve—integrating what you have learned on your trip with the priorities of the church. Don't wait for them to come to you with a proposal.
12. Recognize that your friends and supporters may be under a great deal of stress themselves. Be prepared to counsel, comfort, pray for, and bless them as much as receive their counsel and care.
13. Keep a clear perspective and remember that God is there with you!

Reentry may not be an easy experience for you. But just as God was with you and provided for you during your trip, He will do the same when you are back home.

*Thanks to Lisa Espineli Chinn, Interaction, Inc. and Miriam Adeney
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Life Application Sheet

Take time to read your notes in your journal as well as in the debrief and follow-up exercises. We pray that God has led you to some practical applications as a result of this trip. Be prepared to share some of your answers during your debrief.

1. Are you going to write a missionary? Who? By when?
2. Are you going to write a national? Who? By when?
3. Are you going to read a book about missions? Which one? By when?
4. Are you going to volunteer at your church or in your group for a particular project or program? Which one? By when?
5. Are you going to pray for a country, a missionary, a national? Which ones and how often?
6. Are you going to give financially to missions? Who/what? How much?
7. Are you going to take a class in Bible, or theology, or missions, or language? What class? When?
8. Are you going to gather information about additional service as a missionary? Summer? Mid-term (1 - 2 years)? Career?