



WELCOMING BACK YOUR FRIEND OR FAMILY

~A FEW HELPFUL HINTS~

1. "**Reverse culture shock**" is a real possibility. It's helpful to understand this and learn to recognize its symptoms so you can offer appropriate support to participants. For more information on Reverse Culture Shock check out <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/index.htm>.
2. Realize that returning home is often not a predictable process and can be more stressful than either the participant or you anticipate. Be prepared to offer support long-distance as the participant anticipates coming home and especially after their return.
3. Understand that most participants are, in some ways, different than they were before they left home. They may initially seem to be "strangers." It is hard to know what their experiences have meant to them and how they have changed (they may not even fully understand this yet). It may be necessary to discuss with participants the dynamics of your relationship, but your history together will provide a basis for this process.
4. Be aware of your own expectations of the participants. You may wish that they would just "fit back in" but it is more helpful if you avoid forcing the participants into old roles and relationships. Allow them space and time to readjust and reconnect.
5. Be conscious of all those things that have changed at home. Help participants to understand what has taken place both in the society and among friends and family. Even if they have heard about these events, the impact at home may not have been obvious. You have much to tell them and they can tell you how events at home looked from their overseas location.
6. Avoid criticism, sarcasm, or mockery for seemingly odd patterns of behavior, speech, or new attitudes.
7. Create opportunities for the participants to express their opinions, tell their stories, show their pictures. Listen carefully and try to understand the significance of their overseas experiences. Seek to know what is important to them.
8. Acknowledge that all participants experience some sense of loss. Strange as it may seem to others, participants often grieve for what they have left behind. They may be missing overseas friends, a stimulating environment, the feeling of being special, experiencing greater freedoms or responsibilities, or special privileges.
9. Encourage the participants to maintain personal and professional contacts with friends, FSD, and their organization in the former host country(s). They will regret it if they do not.
10. Offer to mark and celebrate the return of your friend, sibling, or child. Discuss his or her preference for how and when to do so. Be careful of "surprise" parties.
11. Expect some critical comparisons of culture and lifestyle. Keep your responses neutral. It can increase your chances to learn something important about the participants and how their world view has changed. Don't take their comments personally.
12. Make contact with people who have successfully gone through the experience of returning home, you can use the FSD reference network if you wish, just email erin@fsdinternational.org for a contact, and refer the participant to them—it may help both you and the participant through a difficult period of readaptation. You may also want to recommend that the participant contact an alumni through the FSD Linked-In group to get additional insight and feedback.

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