

Returning
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Introduction

“From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.” (Acts 14:26-28)

Barnabas and Paul were sent by God’s Spirit and commended by the church of Antioch. They went back to that community when they finished that work, reporting to them all that God had done. The community welcomed them back and reintegrated them into the fellowship.

Poll

1. Have you lived 6 months or more in another country? Yes or No
2. Was your return to home country: Planned or Crisis / Urgent
3. Did you have a formal debriefing upon your return? Yes or No

Planned Returns

- Furlough or Home Assignment
- End of commitment
- Finished work
- Educational or Training
- Sabbatical
- Holiday

Crisis or Emergency Returns

- Health
- Conflict with team or local leadership
- Natural Disaster
- Social / Political
- War / Violence
- Hostage response
- Moral Failure
- Sickness or death back home
- Financial

From the article on the web site Sending: Preparing the Framework and Safety Nets

www.vineyardmissions.org > Sending Long-Term Cross-Cultural Workers > Sending: Preparing the Framework and Safety Nets

Creating a reentry plan is extremely important to the whole project's success. Sometimes the LTCCW's visits home will be planned, but other times they may be unplanned. In either case, clear expectations between the LTCCW and the sending structure need to be in place. Think about the details of returns: talk about when, why and how a LTCCW comes home. Address things like who will pay for what and under what circumstances you will pay. How about for her childhood friend's third wedding?

Don't presume about the details.

Part of creating an effective reentry plan is thinking mercifully about your LTCCW's emotional state. You want your LTCCW's home visit to be revitalizing, not stressful. Vineyard LTCCWs have commented that ongoing emotional support after they return is critical to them ever wanting to go again. Prepare a cultural reorientation strategy that is appropriate for their age and situation in life. This may be simple actions like going grocery shopping with her and letting her tell you how different everything is and how much things have changed. This can be an extra important step for children and youth, who may be transitioning alone from school in a third-world culture to school in America. Have coffee with your LTCCW and just listen for as long as she wants to talk.

That may not be enough though. Consider doing it more often if you sense she is still struggling with her experience. Be prepared to ask for details. Sympathize. Help her feel enthusiastically welcomed back.

Debriefing your LTCCW, even on short home visits, is crucial for your LTCCW and for your missional understanding. The Vineyard Missions website will give you more information on this. Also check out David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken's transition model called RAFT for more details. The LTCCW's returns can be strategic for your church's missions program but be sure to pay special attention to her emotional health.

There are sometimes unplanned returns, such as for genocide outbreaks. Establish a Crisis Management Network and prepare tenderly for her return. Reverse culture shock can be difficult and confusing for your LTCCW, especially in emergencies or evacuations. Whether visits are planned or unplanned, it is wise and compassionate to have a missionary retreat opportunity awaiting her. Look into a place where she can be alone with God with the comforts of her culture, like a flushing toilet and a hot tub.

Create a Reentry Plan

www.vineyardmissions.org > Sending Long-Term Cross-Cultural Workers > LTCCW check list pg 10

- What details must be considered for planned returns?
- Familiarize with transition models, such as RAFT by David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken (The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds)
- Clarify how often LTCCW returns and who pays for it under which circumstances
- What is the plan for sudden returns?
- Engage Crisis Management Network
- Consider registering with LTCCW's embassy for early warnings and government evacuations
- What is the cultural reorientation strategy, including age appropriate reorientation for children and youth?
- What are appropriate missionary retreat opportunities?

Reverse Culture Shock

I've been changed
Your seem different
This church seems different
Where do I fit?

A Word About Reverse Culture Shock

By John Hervey

Many workers brace themselves for the culture shock they face in their new host country, but are unprepared for the same kind of thing to happen when after two or three years they return to their country and culture of origin. First of all, there are often significant changes that happen while we are on the field. Children grow taller and more articulate, cities change, styles change, and these changes are usually pretty striking to the person who has not seen the gradual process.

Reverse culture shock is real. The quantity of goods, especially in supermarkets and department stores can be overwhelming. I remember the person who said that the first time she walked into a supermarket after arrival here, she had to walk right back out, because she was overwhelmed by the numbers of options to choose from. But beyond the physical changes upon our return, there are changes in church leadership, family dynamics, friendships, social situations, all of which can add up to a lot of change. All of this can leave us confused, disoriented, discouraged.

What most workers find very hard is the attitudes and core values we see displayed in this our home culture, which now we look at with new eyes, new perspectives. We look at our own people, our own churches, and we seem to see rampant materialism, greed, immorality, immodesty, lack of respect, and many other similar negative values. What once looked like freedom now feels like decadence. It is hard to come back to the USA and not be critical. This negativity can poison relationships and rob our joy. The same kinds of skills and knowledge we use to anticipate and move through culture shock overseas can help us when we come back as well. Expect things to be different. Expect people to be different. Roll with the punches, laugh a lot, lighten up, find ways to journal or process your feelings and judgments.

Sample Return Plan

Adapted from Frontiers HMA Plan

1. To rest and refresh body, mind, and spirit of every family member.
2. To reconnect to friends and family.
3. To celebrate and communicate what God has done through the team of goers, and to encourage the senders.
4. To enrich the lives of ministry partners and restore support levels to 100%.
5. To prepare for return to the field, or wherever God is leading you.

Preparations for HMA (Home Mission Assignment) – a few suggestions

1. Start planning early, 3-6 months in advance, depending on the length of the HMA. Prayerfully consider this question: “What is the probability that we might not come back to this location?” How you experience your time before HMA will be influenced by your answers.

2. Plan your time carefully – Many things will compete for it. Set goals with your leader and pastor. What do you especially want to accomplish? Fundraising? Personal study? Rest? Personal development? Project related? Recruitment? Kids’ education? Doctor visits? Etc...

3. Consider a Retreat especially for cross-cultural workers. Find retreats or conferences that will provide an opportunity for spiritual refreshment and encouragement. Your pastoral coach can help you find ministries and retreats that will be suited to your needs.

4. Send a newsletter in advance to let supporters know when you will be available to visit with them or in some cases why you won’t be able to see them. (Remember they have busy lives too.)

5. Send emails to everyone who needs to know in the States.

6. Begin to let your national friends know of your plans so that they can prepare their hearts for your absence. Plan for a time to say goodbye. Express your

appreciation to them in some way. Perhaps you need to tell them that someone else will be in charge or take on your responsibility while you are gone.

7. Think about what you want to bring back with you to share with family and supporters.

For yourself –

- Special souvenirs, tokens and trinkets.
- How about buying a 'coffee table' book about your country? "Show and Tell" items for kids and adults,
- Pictures of key places and people. (i.e. where you live, what do you want to remember or share with others?)
- Tape or digital recording of a "call to prayer" or other sounds from your city/village? (I wish I had recorded how milk was sold in Kazakstan! Or local friends at a meeting or special gathering.) Video tape a trip to the market.
- Buy cultural music and clothing.
- Tape a television show or the news broadcast.
- Do you have worship songs in your new language?
- Do you need to write down any recipes?
- Consider collecting some stamps, coins or currency.
- Find a newspaper or magazine in your host country language.
- Do you want a map, a flag or currency for your country?
- *For others –*
- Purchase gifts for friends and supporters who helped make this possible for you. Look at your supporter list and think about what you would like to find for them.
- Find little thank you gifts that you can leave in home of people that offer hospitality to you.
- What birthdays and other special occasions will occur during your HMA that might be a good time for a locally made gift?

When You Are About to Leave Your Field Assignment...

1. Consider making a list of the most significant friends and acquaintances you have made during your time on the field. Think about how you would like to say goodbye to them. Some you can do in a group setting. Others you really want to do individually. There will be some that you want to leave with a farewell gift. Prayerfully consider what you give.
2. Make sure you get addresses and phone numbers for anyone you want to stay in touch with. Some will have computers and you can possibly get their Skype or email address.
3. Make sure you have resolved any 'unfinished business' in relationships before your leave. Do you need to do any peacemaking?
4. Be aware of your team's policies regarding HMA, and how you should pack or prepare your own personal items before departure. It is usually helpful to write down an inventory of your stuff, leaving a copy with another member of the team and taking one for yourself. Some teams have had to pack up team member's stuff or dispose of it, and the list really helps that process.
5. Start packing early so that you have time at the end for surprise visits and interruptions. Consider packing up your things and living out of a suitcase for the last day or two.
6. When you are finished packing; consider walking through your home and thanking God for something he has done in each room. This could be done as a family. I have found this helpful to bring closure and say goodbye to my personal space.
7. Make time to journal and write down what God has done in your life while you have lived there. Special stories you want to remember. Write about the people you meet who are they, where they live, what they do... anything you want to remember later... Write some in your new language...
8. Is there a special place you want to visit before you leave? Choose a special person to accompany you. Is there something you want to do again before you leave? Perhaps eat at a restaurant or visit someone's home??

During Your Home Assignment, Make Sure You Get Time for...

1. Settling in - try not to schedule to speak immediately upon arrival. You need to get settled and get your bearings again.
2. Visiting family - it might be best to get time away with them if you expect to have a lot of distractions around you. Head for a mountain cabin or some time on the river. Where do you get the best time with your family members?
3. Spiritual Renewal & Refreshment - This won't just happen automatically. You need to set time aside for it like Jesus did. Be creative about your quiet times. Support each other as a couple. Take a day to fast and pray. Attend a conference where you can focus upon your spiritual life.
4. Rest - Don't skip your vacation time. Keep your Sabbath rest days. The last thing you need is to return to the field exhausted. (By the way this happens too often. Many workers seem to try to do too much. Either we need longer HMA's or fewer

things to do during them! In some situations it may be better to consider taking vacation time on the way to or from the field.)

5. Nurturing your relationship with your sending church and supporters. Make a list of who you need to see. Then prioritize that list. Be realistic. Try to set up group meetings rather than meeting with everyone individually. Explain why you can't do this in advance if necessary. Most people understand this. If you can't see someone one this Home Assignment make a note to visit them on the next one.

Pioneers as an example of personal debrief

Personal Debriefing Questions

From a workshop by Ed Scheuerman of Pioneers (2009)

A suggestion for going through these questions: take about 2 hours to get by yourself and answer the questions. Then find a friend a small group of friends with whom to discuss most of the questions. After you talk through some of the questions, have a time of worship and prayer.

1. In 15 minutes, write down as many thoughts as possible about the trip. Include pre-trip preparation and training, and your concerns and fears before you went, along with your observations and feelings about the experience on the field.
2. Pick 3 items from number 1 that have been key to your experience. Describe them in more detail and tell why they were key experiences, thoughts, or feelings. (Take about 10 -15 minutes)
3. Write down 5 things you really liked about the culture.
4. Write down 5 things you really did not like about the culture.
5. Answer the following questions:
 - b. Through this experience, what has God said to me about my life in my home country?
 - c. Through this experience, what has God said to me about my walk with Him?
 - d. Through this experience, what has God said to me about His heart for the world?
 - e. Through this experience, what has God said to me about the work in the place I served?
6. How have you changed in . . .
 - a. Your attitudes about other cultures?
 - b. Your attitudes about my home country?
 - c. Your attitudes about yourself?
 - d. Your understanding of God?
 - e. Your plans for the future?

7. List 3 godly ways that you can communicate these changes to your family and friends who did not serve with you.
8. In light of this mission experience, what are some ways that you want to change? (Example: I want to be less time conscious and more people conscious.)
9. List 3 godly ways you can begin to make these changes.
10. How do you plan to continue your involvement with the work in the place you served?
Write an action plan to carry out these ideas.
11. Write short thank you notes to . . .
 - a. Your field supervisor(s)
 - b. Your home church/whoever supported you with finances and prayer your family
 - c. To the Mobilization Base
12. List 2 things that you would do again or keep as part of the project.
13. List 2 things that you would change about the experience and why.
14. Write down 2 things you would recommend that other people do to prepare to serve in the area in which you served.
15. Write down an outline for 2 or 3 stories learn to tell the story in 3 - 4 minutes. You might want to practice with someone to make sure the story is interesting and brief. (For ideas about how to tell your story, see "How to Tell Your Story" on the web at www.thetask.org/students/approved.)

Questions 16 – 20 deal with issues of re-entry stress (also called reverse culture shock).

For more information about recognizing and working through re-entry stress, see the "Debriefing" section on the web at www.thetask.org/students/approved.

16. From your overseas experience, do you feel you will have tendency to be critical of your home church or collegiate ministry when you return to your home country? If so, why? How can you work through these feelings in a godly way?
17. From your overseas experience, do you have feelings of superiority over those who "stayed behind (and are less spiritual)"? If so, why do you believe that going overseas is superior to staying in your home country to minister? How do you plan to work through these feelings in a godly way?
18. From your overseas experience, do you feel angry at those from your home country for . . .
 - a. Wastefulness

- b. Apathy toward other cultures
- c. Driving "too fast"
- d. Not being truly interested in your mission experience
- e. Other (please explain)

19. Who can give you godly and wise advice about working through your feelings?

20. How do you plan to work through these feelings in a godly way to strengthen your relationship with God, your family and friends, and your ministry

Details for the following resources can be found at www.vineyardmissions.org > Long-Term Cross-Cultural Workers at the bottom of the page.

Standard Debriefing

- Welcoming parties or meetings where they can tell their story
- MTI (www.mti.org) DAR (Debriefing and Renewal)

Crisis Debriefing

- Le Rucher in France
- Mobile Member Care Team West Africa
- Vineyard Mobile Care Team

Third Culture Kids (MK's)

- Narramore Christian Foundation www.ncfliving.org/
- Barnabas International www.barnabas.org

Retreats

Pastoral Sabbath

David Nixon <http://sustainablefaith.com>

Intensive Care

- Link Care (California) www.linkcare.org
- Heartstream: Resources for Cross-cultural Workers (Pennsylvania) www.heartstreamresources.org
- Minnesota Renewal Center (Minnesota) www.minnesotarenewal.org
- Healing for the Nations (Georgia) www.healingforthenations.org
- The Well Counseling Center (Chiang Mai, Thailand) <http://thewellcm.com>
- The Cornerstone Counseling Center (Chiang Mai, Thailand) www.cornerstonecounseling.in.th

Health

- Medical
- Dental
- Nutritional

Educational

- Registering for school
- Child assessments
- Continuing Education
- Training

Resources

- Jordan, Peter; Re-Entry, YWAM Publishing
- Knell, Marion; Families on the Move, Monarch Books
- **Piolo, Neil; The Re-Entry Team, Emmas Road International**
- Storti, Craig; The Art of Coming Home, Intercultural Press
- Collins, Marjorie A.; Mi**ionaries on Furlough, William Carey Library
- Pollock, David; Van Reiken, Ruth; The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing up among worlds. Nicholas Brealey Publishing
- Chinn, Lisa; Reentry Guide for Short Term Mission Leaders, Deeper Roots Publications, 2100 Red Gate Road, Orlando, FL 32818, USA.
www.deeperroots.com

For a transcript of today's Webinar

Send your request to Chris.Costello@vineyardmissions.org