

Here and There: Returning Home

A café evening to help prepare students to
return home

Instructions for the evening

You will need:

- a *Returning Home?* booklet
 - a whiteboard or flipchart and whiteboard pen(s)
 - Soularium or other photos
 - Here and There Returning Home: Expectations sheets (p.4), one for each pair/3, cut into strips (easier not to mix up if you can copy on different coloured paper)
 - Here and There Returning Home Worksheets (p.5-8): one set for each student
 - a pen for each student for use on worksheets
1. Who's going home soon? Just ask for a show of hands to see how many are going home. You might want to ask if some may be going home later (eg doctoral students) or may be locals who have spent time abroad and come home, so will have some insight into this process-this should include more of the group in meaningful discussion.
 2. Reasons for going home: at tables or in pairs/threes students give reasons, leader writes all reasons on whiteboard/flipchart
 3. How will you feel about going home? Soularium photos or other photos spread on tables, each choose one or two, then take turns to discuss. (Soularium is a set of thought-provoking photos available from Cru online at <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/outreach-strategies/soularium.html>) *There can be some telling comments: one student chose a photo of barbed wire to explain how he felt about going home.*
 4. Expectations about how it will be when I go home: optimistic, reasonable, pessimistic Returning Home (RH) p.8/9 on sheet. These Expectations should be printed out (sheet) and cut up so are slips of paper, mixed up. Each pair/3 should have one set of Expectations. They should take turns to choose slips randomly, discuss if optimistic, reasonable or pessimistic and put in appropriate pile. Then leader leads discussion together about what expectations are reasonable-do students agree with powerpoint?
 5. Re-entry stress RH p.11/12 On whiteboard/flipchart draw culture shock curve with four Fs on it-ask what this is, what F's are, fill in. Add second (return) curve with Fs on whiteboard or on second sheet-ask students what these are, to recognise that they face the same pattern on return home. *A returned student who had taken part in this café told me that at the time she hadn't believed return culture shock would happen to her. Than it did. Ask students how long they think re-entry stress/return culture shock will last (RH p.12: 6-12 months)*
 6. How to prepare for going home: use set of worksheets individually then compare in pairs/threes after each page, with café hosts helping if necessary:
 - a. Think about your life here and evaluate
 - b. Changes in yourself: physically, socially, academically, emotionally, financially, culturally, spiritually-draw yourself, write/draw changes
 - c. RHp23 Values that you'd like to take home; your values

- d. Changes at home
- e. RH33-34 Responses to being at home: imitation, isolation, integration: once completed discuss together the good/bad points of each, and how each can be necessary
- f. Read and discuss quotes together if helpful

Our café ends with a five minute epilogue linking the topic of the day with something about Christian faith. For this café I linked mine to the last two suggestions for good closure and farewell (RH p.44, 45): leaving with a grateful attitude and leaving with expectation. This is I linked with Philippians 4: 6,7: not worrying about the future, but in grateful prayer expecting God's peace to fill our hearts as we trust him.

Here and There Returning Home: Expectations sheet

I should be able to cope easily because it is my own culture. I will not have any adjustment problems.

My relationships will be the same as when I left.

My life will be the same as when I left. The adjustment process should last no longer than a few days or weeks.

People will appreciate the knowledge and experience I've gained while I've been abroad.

I know I'm not going to like it back home.

The change is going to be overwhelming; I will not be able to cope.

I will feel depressed, frustrated, disorganised and alone.

No one will understand me or my experience overseas.

Everyone will be suspicious and jealous of me.

I will go through a readjustment period, parts of which may be difficult.

People may respond to me differently, and I should not be surprised if a few are suspicious, jealous or threatened by me.

I can expect many things to stay the same, but I should be prepared to face changes in myself, my family, friends, workplace and the country as a whole.

Returning home may initially feel great, but should be prepared for a conflict of values, confusion and misunderstandings, followed by growth and re-integration.

I will enjoy being reunited with family and friends but will also miss the friends I made in my host country.

Changes: A Personal Audit

List below things that made your stay in your university town or city positive and enjoyable, and those things that made your stay unpleasant and difficult:

Positive and Enjoyable	Unpleasant and Difficult

List the things (values, lifestyle, attitudes, practices, technology...) you like and do not like about living here:

Things I like	Things I don't like

- Are there any things that you **like** that you can take home with you?
- Of the things you **don't like**, have you learned anything through them?
- What experiences and people have influenced you most here?

Who is going home?

“While in the UK I didn’t take physical change seriously as I was still regarded as small in the UK although I had put on weight, but as soon as I went back home, all my friends and family members commented that I was fatter whenever they saw me. It became stressful because in Korean society, physical appearance is very important.” (On returning to Korea)

How have you changed...

- **Physically?**
weight,
clothes, other

- **Socially?**
confidence, independence...

food and
language use preferences

attitudes towards
opposite sex,
authority figures,
people of higher
status or wealth,
family

- **Academically?**
interactions with
lecturers, study
habits, feeling of
professional
competence?

- **Emotionally?**
Are you handling
your emotions-
anger, happiness-
differently?
How will family and
society view this?

- **Politically?**

- **Financially?**

- **Culturally?**

- **Spiritually?**

Values

“Irish people really value and enjoy having fun times with each other, whereas Americans tend to praise hard work. It was good to bring some things back with me, such as purposefully hanging out with people, enjoying life, and being more inclusive of other people. Irish people are adept at that last one.”
(On returning to the USA after studying in Ireland)

Have you noticed any British values?

Would you like to take any of these home with you?

Values continued: Which of the following are values you regard as universal and important, i.e. values that you'd aim to uphold no matter which country you are in?

- Being honest in all situations
- Working hard
- Striving for efficiency
- Thinking of others before yourself
- Pursuing your dreams and being true to yourself
- Valuing friendships
- Supporting your parents materially and any way you can
- Having the right to speak freely in public
- Respecting elders
- Being punctual
- Queueing when waiting for a bus or paying for something
- Believing in democracy
- Maintaining a work/life balance (making time for relationships, hobbies)
- Obeying laws and regulations
- Being impartial (not showing favouritism for example towards relatives)
- Providing for the poor
- Valuing diversity
- Being equally courteous to everyone in society
- Refusing to give or accept bribes

What's Waiting at Home?

"Of course it's been great to see my family and catch up with friends. But it also makes me realise how long I've been away. My elder sister is now married and I'm even an uncle! Several of my friends have got married or have girlfriends and others have moved away to new jobs. In many ways, it feels like starting again."

(On returning to Hong Kong)

"...Life in Southampton seems like a colourful dream... But now, I know I have to come back to the real world. I have to face the problems in the real world: hunting for a job, solving family conflicts and breathing the polluted city air..."

(On returning to China)

What changes have these students found at home?

What do they need to face now that they are at home?

Are these changes the same or different from the ones that you will be facing?

Your response might be:

- **Imitation** *copying others/returning to ways that you acted before you were abroad/wanting meet others' expectations*
- **Isolation** *retreating/seeking the company of expatriates (people from other countries than your own) or other returnees*
- **Integration** *enjoying being at home/integrating the values from your time abroad with life at home/appreciating your home culture and being able to relate to it, perhaps in a different way*

What do you think are the more and less helpful ways of responding?

Finally, be kind to yourself!