

Pre-Return Orientation

Lead Facilitator Guide





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Pre-Return Orientation Leader Guide

Options for Presenting the PowerPoint

- PowerPoint slides are **completely optional**. They are there for you to use only if it fits your setting and your comfort as a facilitator. They are designed to present visual touch points for the activities, add a visual enhancement to the overall orientation, and reinforce AFS as a professional brand to anyone participating.
- PowerPoint slides can be printed and used as handouts (Optional)
- PowerPoint slides can be shown on a screen or wall using a PC and projector (Optional)
- Diagrams and questions can be written on flipchart paper and posted on a wall (Recommended)
- Pages with images in the Leader Guide can be copied and used as handouts (Recommended)

Notes for Orientation Leaders

- Orientation Leaders must have at least one printed copy of the Leader Guide (Required)
- If you have an alternative interactive activity that meets the same objective, you may use it instead.
- Please share any successful activities you have with the ICL department.
- We encourage games and expressive interactive creative activities that help move beyond lecture and discussion wherever possible.

Required Materials for Pre-Return orientation

- ✓ 2-3 pieces of notebook/blank paper per person
- ✓ Flipchart paper
- ✓ Tape
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Pens/pencils
- ✓ Post-It Notes (optional)
- ✓ Index cards
- ✓ Blank Shield handout (optional)
- ✓ Wheel of Experience handout (required)
- ✓ White Favor Boxes [*available at Oriental Trading*] (optional but recommended)
- ✓ Lined paper & envelopes [2-3 sets per participant] (optional but recommended)
- ✓ Postage stamps (optional)

Ice-Breakers

The start of the orientation itself and each session should include quick, interactive activities to break up the topics and help participants transition between different modes of thinking. Recommended ice-breakers include:

- Two Truths & One Lie (public speaking)
- I am... (cultural values)
- "I feel..." emotions check-in (self-awareness)

Suggested Orientation Agenda

- **REQUIREMENT:** MINIMUM of 4 hours
- **RECOMMENDATION:** 6 hours and fun activities over a weekend

Section/Topic	Activity	Slide #	Time
Sharing Experiences & Major Learnings	1. Draw Your Shield	2	30-45 min
	2. Packing Your Suitcase	3	30-45 min
Personal Safety & Well-Being	3. S.O.C.: Risky Behaviors	4	30-45 min
Preparing for Your Departure	4. Wheel of Experience	5	30-45 min
	5. Host Family & Community Appreciation	6	30 min
	6. I Won't Miss...	6	5-10 min
Pulling Together Your Experience	7. Experience in Global Context	7	30 min
Returning Home: Re-Entry & Re-Adjustment	8. Concerns & Awkward Situations	8	45-60 min
Feedback & Evaluation	9. Evaluation	9	5-10 min

Variations

Depending on your group and preference, there are several alternative activities to fulfill the required session "Sharing Experiences & Major Learning". These self-reflection/discussion activities are shown on the PowerPoint slides.

- What Have I Gained From My Experience? (slide #11)
- Words, Meanings, and Changes (slide #12)

Overview

- This orientation focuses on students reviewing their entire experience, making sure they plan for the last weeks and get ready for the challenges waiting for them back home.
- The Pre-Return Orientation is particularly useful for discussing the changes students have undergone during their intercultural experience and preparing them for the transition ahead when returning home.
- At this point, they should have developed in all areas of the AFS Educational Goals, especially in the Cultural Realm (both culture-specific and culture-general), so discussions about prejudice and stereotypes can be substantial.

Objectives

Required Logistics

- Provided needed information about travel arrangements for the trip back home
- Convey to their host parents the schedule of the End-of-Stay Event and any other details relevant to their participation in this event.

Personal Safety & Well-being

- Identify positive alternatives to unhealthy or high-risk behaviors that may seem attractive in the days and weeks leading up to departure
- Identify things that they can do to help ensure their wellbeing while in transit to the home country

Cultural Adjustment & Coping

- Reflect on and record where they are in terms of feelings of competence and confidence and their level of satisfaction on their cultural adjustment curve
- Review the years' experience in terms of ups and downs on their own adjustment curve and reflect on their initial expectations for the experience
- Discuss strategies for coping with challenges related to re-entry
- Identify one or more ways to help mentally prepare for departure

Culture Learning

- Reflect on, celebrate and share one "visible" and one "invisible" aspect that they have learned about: themselves, their home and host cultures, and their natural and host family
- Reflect on and record how this newfound knowledge may impact their life in the future
- Plan how to say "goodbye" and "thank you" to the host family and friends in a culturally appropriate way

Expectations & Goals

- Identify tasks to be done in preparation for their return and ways to accomplish these
- Review progress made on the goals they set for themselves throughout the experience
- Record and share personal growth as a result of the experience
- Reflect on and discuss how these changes may be viewed by their natural family and friends and others in their home culture
- Provide positive feedback to other AFS participants within the group, and to host country support volunteers



Pre-Return Orientation Leader Guide

Session

Sharing Experiences & Major Learnings

Activity (Methodology)

Draw Your Shield (Self-reflection, drawing)

When to do the exercise

First activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: Any size

Materials: Printed blank Shield handouts, pens, markers

Slide #: 2

Objectives

- Enabling students' self-reflection on change and transition
- Reflect on, celebrate and share one "visible" and one "invisible" aspect that they have learned about: themselves, their home and host cultures, and their natural and host family

Variations

This exercise can either be done with by first leading the discussion and then having students draw and share their shields. Alternately, students can draw their shields first and then share them during the discussion.

Introduction

1. Living in another culture provides you with the opportunity to gain new skills, ways of thinking and attitudes.
2. This activity helps you understand how you have changed during the last year by creating a shield that represents your development.
3. In some cultures, a shield has images or symbols that represent a family's or individual's personality or character.
4. For example, lions represent courage and hearts represent love or happiness.
5. The shield in this activity will represent the elements that have become a part of you because of this exchange process.

Directions

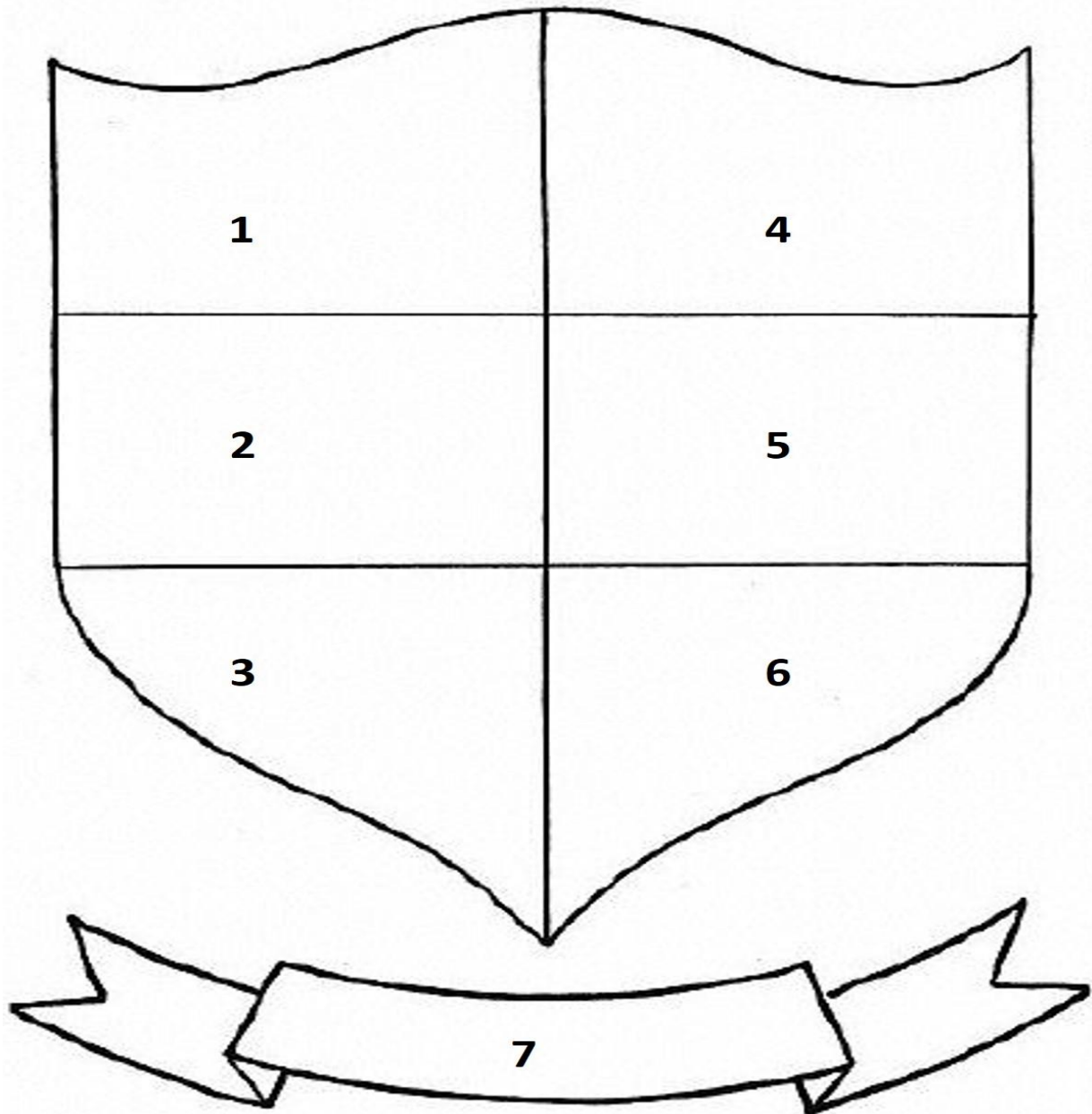
1. Give each student a printed Blank Shield or have them draw the outline on scrap paper.
2. Give prompts for each number and have students fill in their Shield.
3. Have students share and discuss their shields.

Discussion

1. Describe how you see yourself and how do you think others see you.
2. Describe how you have changed since your arrived in the U.S.
3. Describe how your host parents and/or host siblings have changed.
4. Describe how you think the ways you have changed may affect you when you return home.

What to draw on your Shield

1. Your impression of the U.S. before you arrived
2. Your most enjoyable experience
3. Your most difficult adjustment in the U.S.
4. Your impression of the U.S. now
5. How you or your personality have changed over the program
6. The most important thing you discovered about yourself
7. Your full name





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Session

Sharing Experiences & Major Learnings

Activity (Methodology)

What Are You Taking Back Besides Your Belongings? (Self-reflection, discussion)

When to do the exercise

Second activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: Any size

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, pens, index cards (14+ per student), **Slide #:** 3

White "Gable Boxes" (one per student - optional but recommended)

Objectives

- Enabling students' self-reflection on change and transition
- Reflect on, celebrate and share one "visible" and one "invisible" aspect that they have learned about: themselves, their home and host cultures, and their natural and host family

Instructions

If using boxes, distribute them at the start of the activity and have students write their name on the bottom of their box in case the boxes are stored together temporarily after the activity until the end of the orientation. The boxes are for students to keep and they should bring their box back to their home country as a memory of their AFS experience.

It is recommended to have additional Index cards available for students, in case they want to write more.

An option to help students keep track of the questions/topic is to write the prompts one-by-one on flipchart paper and read them aloud to students.

Introduction

1. Before coming to the US, you packed at home and came here with "luggage", which included all the things about yourself and your culture that were part of who you are in YOUR culture.
2. You unpacked and have been living in the US for more than half a year.
3. Soon, you will you are packing again.
4. But in many ways, what you are packing to take home is different, not just clothing and gifts, but also your "personal luggage" containing who you are.
5. Think of these boxes as your "personal luggage" that you will be taking home with you.
6. You will "packing" them with your thoughts and feelings and will have the chance to personalize them more.

7. We're going to look at ways you may have changed – your attitudes and values – which you may not be aware of.
8. Think about ways which you have changed and how they might affect your acceptance by your family and friends in your home country.

Directions

1. Have students to sit in a semicircle formation.
2. Give each student their own box.
3. Give 14 Index Cards to each participant.
4. Read the prompts (see next page) and give students a few minutes to write on their card and illustrate it, if they choose.
5. For each prompt, describe an experience on an Index card that has changed them during the year and how that change has affected them, then labelling it as “Open” or “Closed”.
6. Clarify that “Open” means that people from their home country will be able to understand the experience and “Closed” means that the people will not be able to understand the experience.
7. Ask a few students to share their experiences and if it is “Open” or “Closed”, as much as they feel comfortable.
8. Ask if anyone else had a similar experiences/reflection, allowing others to comment/share if they feel comfortable.
9. After sharing is finished, students place their index cards into their box or “personal luggage”.
10. Move on to the next prompt and repeat the process.

Discussion conclusions

1. Please take your “personal luggage” home with you and “open” it after you arrive.
2. In your home culture and country, your reflections will be both valuable and helpful to you re-adjust.
3. You can also share your reflections with your friends and family if you are comfortable.
4. Your parent(s) may be able to understand that you have grown in many ways and may be more mature.
5. However, some people in your home countries may not be able to understand your experiences.
6. You can always stay connected with AFS in your home country, communicate with fellow Returnees, and consider becoming an AFS Volunteer in your local community.

Prompts

1. What are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that helped you navigate the intercultural experience you have had so far?
2. Are there aspects of your personal appearance that might be perceived negatively at home?
3. Are there any customs (eating habits, drinking, forms of socializing) you have picked up that might seem strange at home?
4. Are there any changes in your style of relating to other people that might seem unusual at home? For instance, are you more casual, more assertive, or more straightforward with friends? Are you more open with strangers? Or have you adopted a more indirect style?
5. Are there any changes in your attitude toward the opposite sex? Towards status or social standing?
6. How much more independent do you feel now than you did at home?
7. How has making personal choices become more important to you?
8. How have your attitudes toward religion changed?
9. How has your attitude toward time changed? Are you more or less concerned about being punctual?
10. What are your attitudes toward honesty? Do you view being dishonest differently than before?
11. How do you feel now about spending time by yourself? Do you prefer to keep your bedroom door closed or open? Spending time with family and friends?
12. Which of the above changes in behavior or attitudes might seem strange at home?
13. What change do you think will please your family the most?
14. Are there some experiences in your "suitcase" that some people may understand (family or friends in their home country) and other people may not understand?



Pre-Return Orientation Leader Guide

Session

Personal Safety and Well-being

Activity (Methodology)

S.O.C.: Risky Behaviors (Brainstorming, small group work, discussion)

When to do the exercise

Third activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: 3-6 people

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, pens

Slide #: 4

Objectives

1. Identify positive alternatives to unhealthy or high-risk behaviors that may seem attractive in the days and weeks leading up to departure
2. Generate advice for future AFS participants hosted in their area about how to avoid/deal with stressful, unhealthy, risky and/or uncomfortable situations

Variations

This exercise can lead as a brainstorming activity in small groups, a poster-making activity in pairs/small groups, an open discussion. Alternately, teams can do skits to demonstrate the different SO.C. options and outcomes, which can be debriefed and discussed as a group.

Introduction

1. As the end of the program nears, students might feel tempted to do things that they wouldn't normally do, such as getting a piercing, getting a tattoo, shoplifting, having sex (for the first time), using drugs or alcohol, driving, etc.
2. It is essential for you to be aware of potential risks, even if you have no intention of engaging in risky behavior, because it is not possible to control every aspect of a situation; risk may be caused by encounters with others.
3. Your AFS program is the opportunity for you to develop and grow, as well as practice self-advocacy and pro-active problem-solving, with the help of local resources, such as your host parents and Liaison.

Discussion

1. What are some common risky behaviors or situations that are common among teens in the US?
2. What risky behaviors or situations might you have seen or experienced?
3. In which situations might you find yourself facing such risky situations?

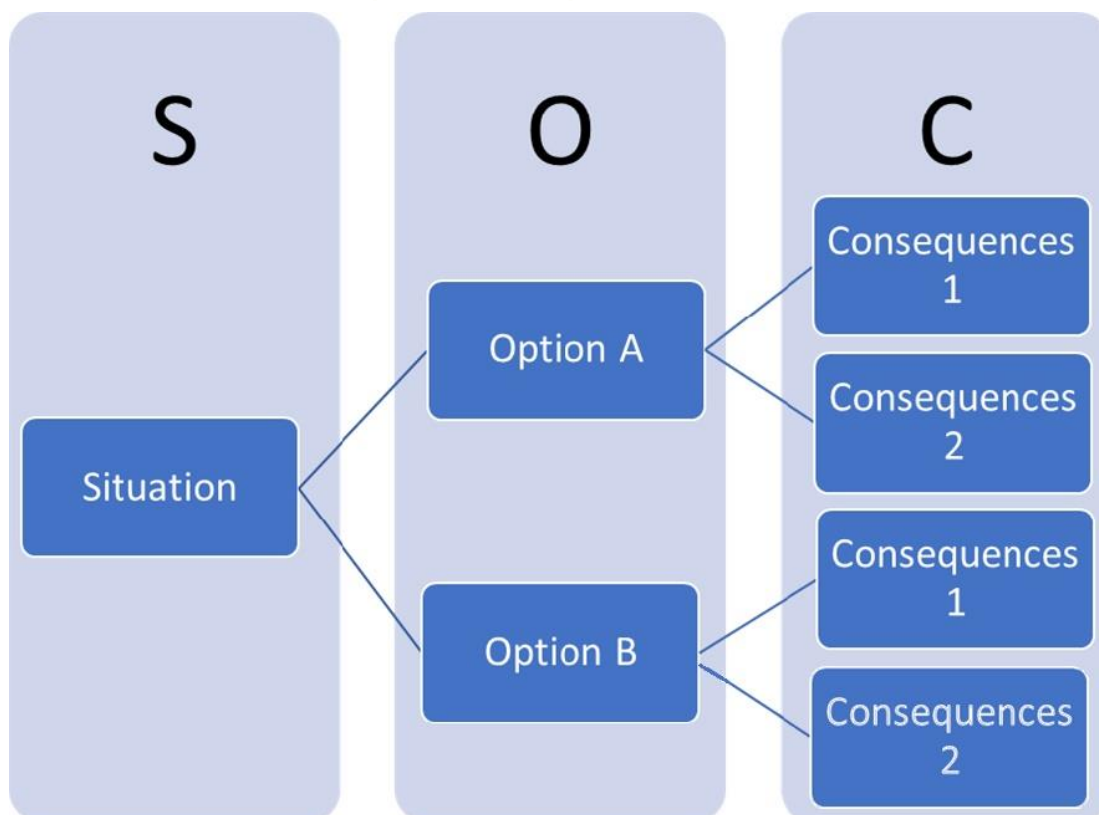
Instructions

1. Split group into teams of 3-6 students.
2. Give each team a piece of flipchart paper and some markers.
3. Assign one risky behavior to each team (sex, drinking, drugs, skipping school, driving, sneaking out etc.)
4. Direct each team write/illustrate the S.O.C. process for their specific behavior on the flipchart paper.
5. Review the S.O.C. Process: Situation, Options, Consequences
6. Allow 10-15 min to complete the task.
7. Gather teams together and have each present their flipchart individually.
8. Lead discussion

Debrief

1. Why do you think students feel the urge to engage in risky behaviors near the end of their program?
2. What are some of the reasons to avoid engaging in risky behaviors?
3. Who or what can help you to make safe choices or deal with consequences of risky behavior?
4. What are some ineffective way to respond to peer pressure or temptation toward risky behavior?
5. What are some effectives way to respond to peer pressure or temptation toward behavior?
6. What safe events or local attractions could you enjoy between now and departure as opposed to engaging in risky behaviors?

S.O.C. Model (Situation, Options, Consequences)



Session

Preparing for Your Departure

Activity (Methodology)

Wheel of Experience (self-reflection, discussion)

When to do the exercise

Fourth activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: Any size

Materials: Printed handouts of Wheel of Experience, pens/marker

Slide #: 5

Objectives

- Create a positive and interactive environment in which to share and discuss experiences and goals
- Review progress made on their areas of growth and personal goals that they made at Mid-Stay Orientation
- Record and share personal growth as a result of the experience
- Reflect on the all aspects of their AFS experience

Directions

1. Pass out handout and pen/marker to each participant. An example Wheel is on page 15.
2. Instruct students to fill out the “Wheel of Experience”, scoring themselves on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high) in the following categories:
 - Language Learning
 - Developing Relationships (formerly „Developing Friends“)
 - School
 - Culture Learning
 - Personal Growth
 - Well-being (formerly „Health“)
 - Community Engagement (formerly „Attitude“)
 - Family Life
3. Ask if any students would like to share their “Wheel of Experience”.
4. Discuss strategies used to improve since Mid-Stay Orientation.
5. Discuss personal growth strategies that could be used between Pre-Return and End-of-Stay, as well as after students return home.

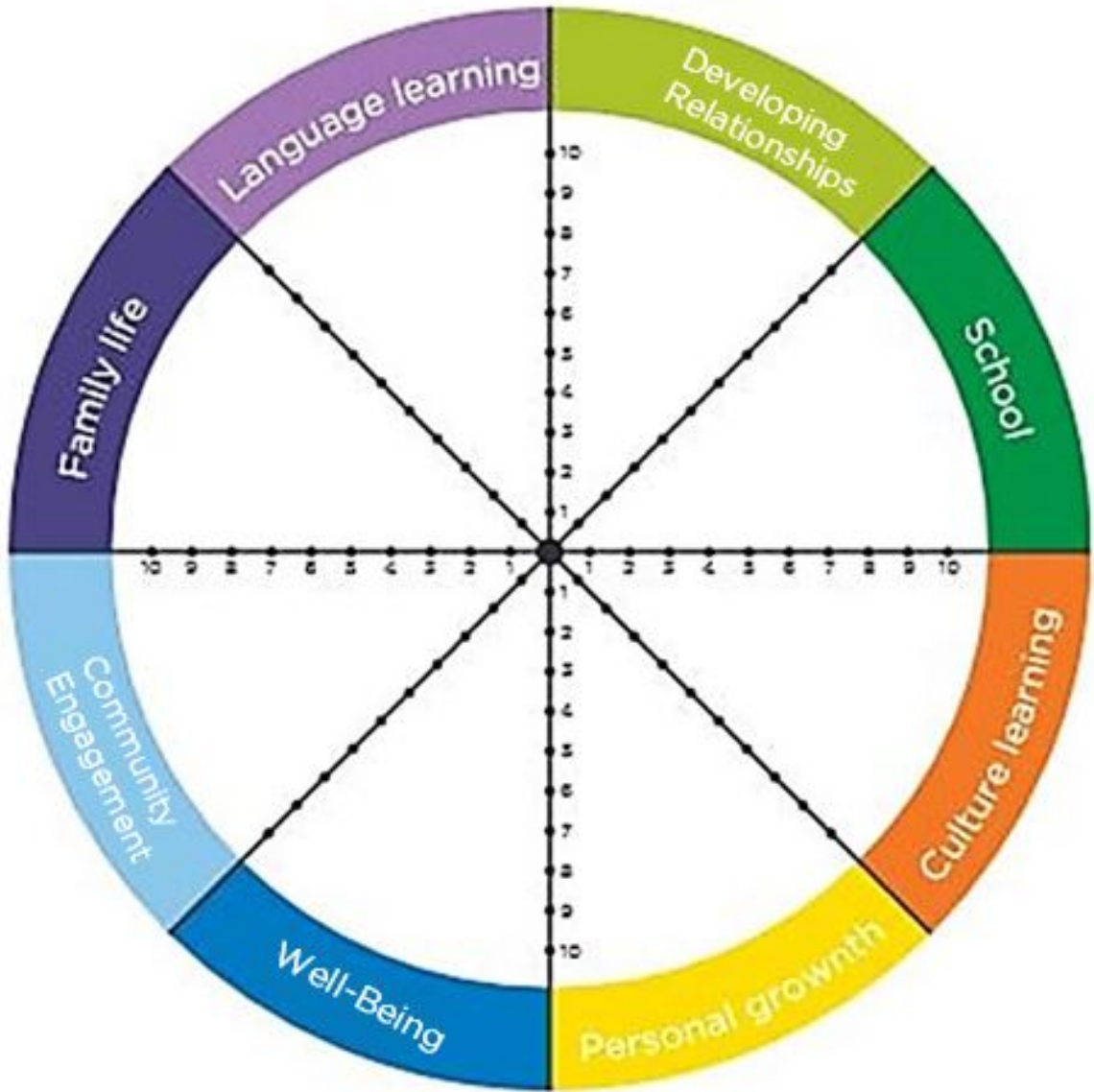
Discussion

1. In what areas do you now feel like you have the most experience or success?
2. How does your Wheel of Experience now compare to your Wheel of Experience at Mid-Stay Orientation?
3. What strategies did you use to improve on areas of your AFS experience?
4. What were one or two goals that you had set for yourself?
5. Do you feel that you accomplished your goals or could continue working on them?
6. In what areas would you like to keep working on or strengthening?
7. What strategies could you use to improve in those areas?
8. What is something that you want to accomplish before you leave?
9. What must you do in order to accomplish it?

Debrief

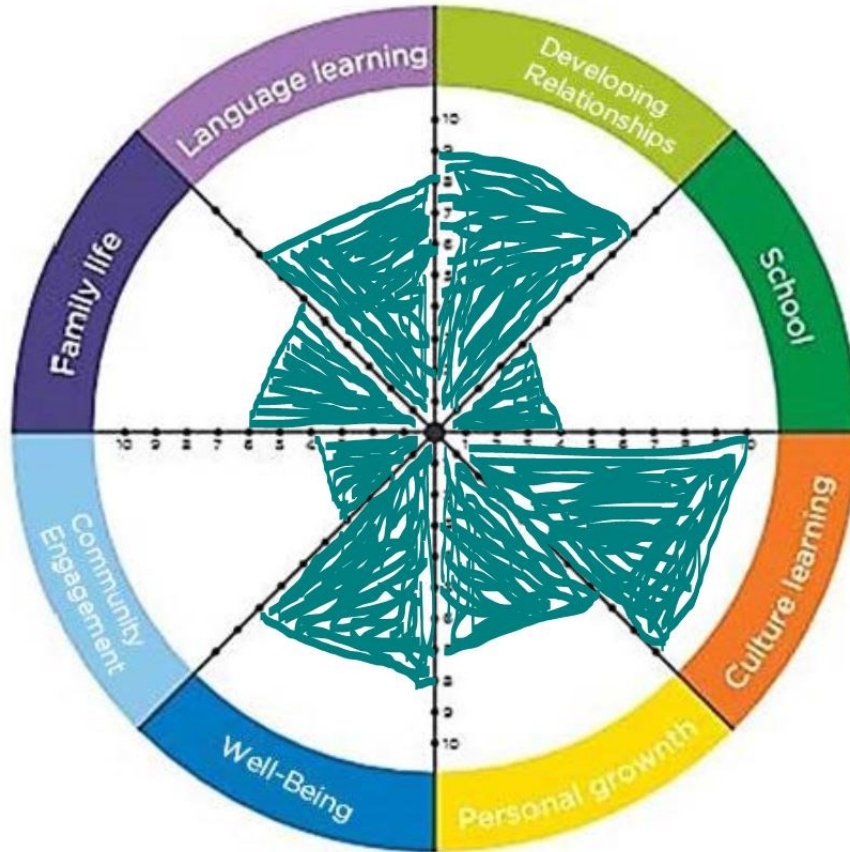
- Thinking about what you want to do before you return home will help you prepare for the return.
- Getting ready to return home includes finishing projects and activities in which you are involved in the U.S. and preparing for your departure such as packing luggage and mailing back extra items.
- Being organized and prepared will give you more time to spend with friends and family.
- Don't wait until the last day to "tie up" loose ends because they tend to be very hectic and busy.
- Do you have your transcripts and other necessary school documents ready?
- Preparing yourself emotionally to leave your host community and family is also part of tying up loose ends.
- Many of you will be leaving close friends, boyfriends or girlfriends, and a new family.
- It's common to feel some loss during this time and even experience a process of grief as you face leaving.
- Closer to your departure, it would be good time to remind people in your home country of your upcoming return.
- By letting friends and family know in advance, they can prepare to welcome you home and offer you support as you re-adapt to your home culture.
- It's also important to remember that it is common for returnees to experience "reverse culture shock".
- Just as you may have experienced stress of culture shock while adapting to culture in the U.S., you may have a similar experience in your home country as you re-adjust.
- If you need to talk about some concerns and any emotional stress you are feeling during the final weeks, contact your AFS liaison, school counselor or other local volunteer with whom you feel comfortable.
- Remember to practice self-care (get plenty of sleep, eat a healthy diet, talk about your emotions if you feel comfortable, take time for yourself, ask for support from others etc.) as you are getting ready to leave the U.S. and when back in your home country.

Wheel of Experience



Pre-Return Orientation: Sample Wheel of Experience

Wheel of Experience



My Wheel

Language Learning: 8

Developing Relationships: 9

School: 4

Culture Learning: 10

Personal Growth: 7

Well-Being: 8

Community Engagement: 4

Family Life: 6

Areas of Success (since MSO)

Language Learning: was 5 at MSO

Developing Relationships: was 6

Family Life: was 3

Areas of Growth (now to EOS)

School: want to be 8+

Community Engagement: want to be 5+

Family Life: want to be 9 or 10



Pre-Return Orientation Leader Guide

Session

Preparing for Your Departure

Activity (Methodology)

Host Family and Community Appreciation (Self-reflection, discussion)

When to do the exercise

Fifth activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: Any size

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, pens, index cards (6 per student), White "Gable Boxes" or "Chinese Take-Out Boxes", blank/lined paper (2-3 per student), envelopes

Slide #: 6-7

Objectives

- Prepare students for their departure by providing practical and logistical information to become aware of the separation process
- Discuss ways they can bring closure to their experience
- Identify one or more ways to help mentally prepare for departure
- Reflect on the positive aspects of the experience
- Plan how to say "goodbye" and "thank you" to the host family and friends in a culturally appropriate way
- Review progress made on the goals they set for themselves throughout the experience
- Record and share personal growth as a result of the experience

Variations

During this activity, students write Thank-You letters to their Host Parent(s) and/or Liaison. The letters can be collected by Volunteers and mailed to recipients, with stamps provided by Orientation Leader or Volunteers. Alternately, Volunteers can collect and keep the letters, then return them at End-of-Stay Orientation, so they can be given in-person or mailed out before students depart.

Reflections Introduction

1. Your AFS year is winding down and soon you will be on a plane heading back to your home country.
2. Now is a good time to think about all that is before you, what you've been able to get done and what you need to get done before you leave.
3. Saying goodbye to your friends and family in the U.S. isn't an easy part of your AFS experience.
4. Taking time to say goodbye to your friends and family is important.

5. It's good to know you have not left any "unfinished business" or important things left unsaid when you return home.
6. It's natural to feel some loss.
7. You may experience some of the same feelings you did when you left your natural family.
8. You may begin to push friends and family away from you in anticipation of leaving.
9. It's also natural for the family to feel this way.

Directions

1. Think about your AFS experience.
2. Listen to each prompt and write your reflections on an Index card.
3. Use one index card per prompt.
4. Give several minutes for each prompt.
5. Ask if anyone would like to share what they wrote.

Reflections Prompts

1. People you will miss
2. Places you will miss
3. Things you will miss
4. People you look forward to talking with about your AFS experience
5. Places in your home country that you look forward to going
6. Things in your home country that you look forward to doing

Thank-You Letters Introduction

1. A lot of good things have happened to you during the year.
2. Who has supported and helped you during the year? (*Liaison, School advisor, Chapter president, Host family, Other AFS Volunteers, etc.*)
3. How can you thank the people who have made it possible and say goodbye?
4. Thanking the people who have helped you throughout your year – your teachers, family, volunteers, and friends - is important.
5. Your "thank-you's" are meaningful to them and they help keep the AFS Program alive in your community.
6. It means a lot to your host families to hear from you after you return to your home country.

7. The exchange experience has provided you with the opportunity to develop deep and meaningful relationships with people from another culture.
8. Some of these relationships will last over the miles and through the years.

Directions

1. Now, we will be writing thank-you notes/letters of appreciation.
2. Everyone should write 2-3 thank-you notes using the paper provided.
3. Everyone should write a thank-you note to their host parents. You can write to your host mother and host father separately if you like.
4. The other thank-you notes are up to you. You could write to your Liaison or a favorite teacher in school.
5. Be sure to address the name of each person in the note. (ex: Dear/To/For __)
6. Be sure to sign your letters with your name. (ex: From/Love/Sincerely, __)
7. Each thank-you note goes in an envelope with the recipient's full name.



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Session

Preparing for Your Departure: Things to Do Before Returning Home

Activity (Methodology)

I Won't Miss... (Energizer, Self-reflection)

When to do the exercise

Sixth activity

Time Needed: 5-10 Min

Group Size: Any size

Materials: pens, blank paper, waste paper basket/bin

Slide #: none

Objectives

- Acknowledge and process the less positive experiences and cultural norms while on program
- Gain closure and understanding that mixed emotional reactions and experiences are normal
- Recognize that cultural norms experienced on program are temporary and usually change upon their return home

Variations

Any large container can be used, though a waste paper basket has more significance/meaning in relation to the task. Groups with many students can form several small circles or one large circle.

Introduction

1. It is completely normal to have less-than-positive experiences and feelings about cultural norms while you are on program.
2. For many of you, once you return home, you will no longer have experience the things that you didn't like while you were on program.
3. Some of the things that you didn't like may be cultural norms or behaviors (communication styles, relationships, etc.), things relating to host family life (rules, chores etc.), or other aspects of life in the U.S. (school, homework, the food etc.).
4. By acknowledging the things that you didn't like and understanding that they are/were just a temporary part of your life, you can focus much more on enjoying your final weeks on program.
5. Knowing that those things will no longer be part of your life can help the re-adjustment process to go more smoothly as well.

Directions

1. Give one piece of paper to each student.
2. Tears the paper into 3 strips/pieces.
3. Ask: **What are 3 things that won't you miss after you return home?**
4. Write one thing you won't miss on each piece of paper.
5. Stands up and form a large circle.
6. Place the waste paper basket/bin in the center of the circle.
7. Crumple each piece paper, so everyone has 3 paper balls.
8. Task: **At the count of 3, everyone will throw their paper balls into the garbage.**
9. Count down to three.
10. After finishing the task, go around the circle and ask each person to use one "feeling" word to describe themselves at that moment.



Pre-Return Orientation Leader Guide

Session

Pulling Together your Experience

Activity (Methodology)

Experience in Global Context (Brainstorming, small-group project, presentation)

When to do the exercise

Seventh activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: 2-6 people

Materials: flipchart paper, markers

Slide #: 9

Objectives

- Understand the interdependence of the global community and have an increased awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world
- Be willing and ready to work with others to help world peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world
- Demonstrate how the exchange experience has increased their global awareness and how they can make a difference
- Demonstrate their increasing their interest in world affairs and doing something positive to accomplish the AFS mission

Overview

Have students identify sustainability issues and brainstorm ways they can help with environment, poverty, disabilities or other issues in a sustained manner. Encourage students to engage in a further or new individual group project after the orientation and/or after their AFS program.

Variations

Students can work in small groups to brainstorm and choose a specific sustainability issue to address. Alternately, small groups can be assigned a specific issue to work on.

Introduction

1. AFS has given you the opportunity to live in another culture and see things from a different perspective.
2. Through this experience AFS hopes you will make a difference in the world and contribute to world peace.
3. One way you can do this is by closely following world affairs, looking for solutions to current world problems and making your voice heard.

4. This activity will give you a chance to practice using your new, global perspectives by coming up with your own ideas on how to contribute positively and help to resolve some of the challenges and issues that the world faces today and in the future.

Directions

1. Break large groups into teams of 2-6 students.
2. Instruct each team to choose one world issue and brainstorm **5** things that they, as AFSers, can do to help with this issue/challenge:
 - Inequality (globally, gender, socially, racial etc.)
 - Discrimination and/or bias
 - The rise of nationalism (in any country)
 - Global citizenship
 - The future of education
 - Technology and society
 - Ecology (globally and locally)
3. Give each team a piece of flipchart paper and markers.
4. Allow 15-20 minutes for teams to discuss their issue and create a poster illustrating it and their 5 suggestions.
5. Once completed, each team presents about their poster (the issue and ideas).
6. Put up all posters on a wall or visible place.
7. Allow extra time for students to walk around and look at all posters.
8. Lead follow-up discussion with students.

Discussion questions

1. Which issue do you think is the most challenging to face? Why?
2. Which issue do you think is the most important to face? Why?
3. Which issue do you think has the biggest impact on you/your generation? Why?
4. How does the issue or topic relate to the AFS Learning Objectives?
5. Which AFS Learning Objective is it most related to: Personal development, Interpersonal Relationships, Intercultural Knowledge, or Global awareness?
6. How has your perspectives or opinions about this changed as a result of your AFS experience?
7. How might your current perspective on this issue differ from your friends, family and/or community in your home country?
8. What are some ways that you, while still on program and after you return home, can contribute towards helping to solve these issues?

Session

Returning Home: New Beginnings

Activity (Methodology)

Concerns & Awkward Situations (Brainstorming, discussions)

When to do the exercise

Eighth activity

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Group Size: Any

Materials: flipchart paper, markers, Post-It notes, pens

Slide #: 10

Objectives

- Be more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture
- Form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solutions to a problem
- Discuss strategies for coping with challenges related to re-entry
- Identify one or more ways to help mentally prepare for departure
- Reflect on and discuss how these changes may be viewed by their natural family and friends and others in their home culture
- Recognize and validate their concerns
- Identify ways to keep involved with AFS

Overview

The session has two parts. Be sure to take a short break between the two parts, as there is a lot of brainstorming involved in both.

A piece of flipchart paper labeled “Concerns” can be posted on a wall/surface, upon which students can place their Post-It notes.

Alternately, the topic of “Concerns” can be announced and students can place their Post-It notes on a designated surface.

Part 1: Introduction

1. Many people find it difficult to adjust being at home again after living in another country.
2. Many experience the same adaptation process that happened when they lived in the foreign culture.
3. This is often called “reverse culture shock” and is very common.
4. The excitement of the first few days and weeks may change into more normal, routine feelings, and then slip into feelings of confusion.

5. Some returnees get frustrated because people don't understand them or the new things that are important to them.
6. When a person lives in another culture for a significant length of time, attitudes and outlook change.
7. For example, you may have slowly adopted the ways of the host culture.
8. Many aspects of your home country may have also changed: for instance, attitudes of family and friends, and even the way your community looks may change.
9. It is easy to assume that there will be few problems when you return to your home community and natural family.
10. After all, this is a return to your native culture where you speak the language fluently and have old friends and family members awaiting your arrival.
11. However, the fact is that the greater the cultural differences between the host community and the home community, and the longer the time spent in the host community the more likely that "re-entry shock" or reverse culture shock will cause problems for you.

Part 1: Concerns

1. Post a flipchart paper on the wall and label it "Concerns".
2. Task: **What are some concerns that you have about returning home?**
Write one per Post-It note and stick them anywhere on the flipchart paper.
3. Allow a few minutes for students to complete the task and sit down again.
4. Read the Post-It notes aloud and ask students which might category they go in into:
 - Academic/School
 - Family
 - Relationships
 - Personal
 - Language
5. On the flipchart paper, move the Post-It notes into grouping, one for each category.
6. Label each category.
7. Discuss and brainstorm possible solutions or strategies to handle each concern.

Part 1: Discussion

1. What are the most common concerns?
2. What do you think could be the most effective solutions?
3. Who can help and support you when dealing your concerns?
4. What are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that helped you navigate the intercultural experience you have had so far?
5. Which skills did you feel you had before you began the program?
6. Which skills did you develop during your exchange?
7. Which skills do you think might be most helpful for you when dealing with re-adjustment concerns?

Part 2: Introduction

1. We're going to look at some come re-adjustment situations that might occur when you go home.
2. Then, we will brainstorm a variety of culturally-appropriate yet effective ways to handle each awkward situation.
3. We will also discuss how our family or friends might feel in these situations.
4. This will help us find ways of behaving that are acceptable to them as well as to ourselves.

Part2: Awkward Situations

1. You want to share lots of stories about school and host family, but your friends get bored and your family gets annoyed.
2. Your natural parents tell you not to do something, which was OK in the US/with your host family, and you disagree.
3. You picked up some US habits and values that may not be shared by your natural family and friends. (ex: emphasis on time, honesty, openness, directness, independence, etc.)

Part 2: Discussion

1. What awkward situations do you think are common for AFS Returnees?
2. What might be some good ways that AFS Returnees handle awkward situations?
3. What might be some good strategies that AFS Returnees use to avoid awkward situations?
4. What could be the most challenge part of navigating from U.S. culture to your home culture?
5. What was the most challenging part of navigating between these two cultures when you first came on program?
6. Were your successful ways of coping while you were on program?
7. What did you learn about yourself and others?
8. What might be some good strategies, which are appropriate in your home culture, that you could use to handle re-adjusting and any awkward situations?

Debrief conclusions

1. You have all developed a number of skills during your AFS year.
2. These same skills will help you in adapting to your home environment.
3. These skills include problem-solving, communication, ability to meet new people, patience, and a greater interest in things.
4. Keep in mind that re-adjusting to your home culture is a part of the whole AFS experience.
5. In many ways, returning home is a new beginning, so being open to new ideas and ready for new challenges represents the AFS spirit.
6. Be aware that it is normal to experience reverse culture shock when you return home.
7. Being aware of how you have grown will help you re-adjust to your "home" culture.
8. Many people (natural parents, friends, other Returnees, AFS volunteers etc.) care about you and can be supportive as you re-adjust.
9. Understand that there may be some difficult or emotional times.

10. Family and friends want to help, but might sometimes be unsure of how to support you, what to say or what to do.
11. Re-adjustment can take time, so remember not to push yourself too hard, don't be afraid to express yourself, and ask for help if you need it.
12. Taking time for self-care is important; if you feel like you need space and time to process your feelings, try to let others know so they can support you and give you whatever you need.
13. Remember that the re-adjustment process is unique for everyone; there is no "one way" that it should happen.
14. Understand that some people may want to hear many stories about your AFS experience, but some people may change the subject or be less interested.
15. However, they may be interested in hearing more about your experience – later.
16. There are several things you can do to make your re-adjustment easier.
17. You can get in touch with fellow AFS returnees in your area, and talk to them about your feelings since they went through the same things not long before.
18. Talking about your experience will bring new insights.
19. There are many ways to share your new perspectives.
20. You will continually grow as you reflect on the similarities and differences between your countries and cultures.
21. Many schools and community groups welcome presentations about intercultural experiences and other countries.
21. Ask your local AFS volunteer if you can get involved in an orientation for either the hosted students or prospective students going abroad.



Pre-Return Orientation Leader Guide

Activity (Methodology)

Feedback & Evaluation (Assessment)

When to do the exercise

Ninth activity

Time Needed: 5-10 Min

Group Size: Any size

Materials: Printed Evaluations (optional), pens (optional), URL for Evaluation

Slide #: None

Objectives

Complete the evaluation of the Pre-Return Orientation

Variations

The survey can be given out to each student in printed form, with Volunteers collecting them and entering the data into the online survey. Alternately, the URL link can be shared, and students can complete the survey online.

Survey URL

<http://bit.ly/afs-pro>

Directions

1. Distribute URL and/or printed form to each student.
2. If using printed form, collect when students are finished.

Pre-Return Orientation Survey: Questionnaire for AFS Students

1. Your home country

2. Name of your Area Team (in the USA)

3. What did you like about the Pre-Return Orientation?

4. What did you dislike about the Pre-Return Orientation?

5. How do you rate the activities at the Pre-Return Orientation?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Fair
- Poor

Additional Comments

6. What was the single most valuable thing you learned at the Pre-Return Orientation?

7. Any areas where your Orientation Leader(s) did particularly well? Any areas of improvement for your Orientation Leader(s)?



AFS-USA Mission

AFS-USA works toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

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