

Pre-Departure Orientation

Lead Facilitator Guide

Afternoon Session:
Students only





Pre-Departure Orientation Leader Guide

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Activity (Methodology)

Tricky Scenarios (Open forum, group discussion)

When to do the exercise

1st

Time Needed: 30-45 Min

Materials: None

Group Size: Any size

Slide #: 1-7

Objectives

- List sources of support during difficult situations.
- Establish appropriate ways to react to different scenarios.
- Identify personal strategies to help prevent/deal with difficult situations while on program.
- Reflect on reactions to cultural differences in the U.S. and how they might react to differences while on program.

Overview

1. The scenarios can be discussed individually in small groups or read through and discussed as one large group.
2. Tricky Scenarios can read aloud from the Leader Guide (page 3-5) or be shown on the optional PowerPoint slides #1-7. The optional slides have text and photos that show automatically.
3. Be sure to debrief with students and discussing all 7 Tricky Scenarios.
4. Remind students that they can and should always communicate with their host family and Local AFS Volunteer (Liasion, etc.) about any concerns or issues.

Instructions

1. Show each slide, read through the scenarios listed on page 3-5 and discuss these questions.
 - **How would you react if you encountered this scenario in the US?**
 - **Does the scenario impact your health/safety?**
 - **Could the scenario impact your adjustment to your host country/culture?**
 - **What sources of support do you have at your disposal?**
 - **Do any of the AFS rules apply to this scenario?**
 - **How might you handle this scenario in your host country?**

Debrief

- The objective of this activity, and of this orientation, is not to provide you with a solution for every single situation you may face while on program.
- The purpose is to provide you all with the knowledge and tools to adjust to and/or overcome the challenges you will face.
- Remember, the AFS Support system is in place to help you.

- But, your experience will primarily be defined by you and how you choose to approach situations, opportunities, and challenges.

Tricky Scenarios: Touchy-Feely [Slide #1]

- In the US, your family is close-knit, but people don't hug or touch each other much.
- In your host family, people seem to always be touching each other.
- Your host brother always puts his arm around you in public places, and your host mother holds your arm when out for a walk.
- This feels strange to you.

Critical Response

- Observe others around you. Do others behave this way as well? Do friends act this way toward each other? Is it gender-related? Is it relationship-related?
- If your observation tells you this is typical behavior, you may simply need to adapt.
- If you are still uncomfortable or you feel you are being treated differently, talk to your host family or liaison about the issue.

Tricky Scenarios Study: It's a Religious Thing [Slide #2]

- In the US, you do not go to church very often.
- The host family is very religious/spiritual.
- They attend religious services each week.
- You would rather not spend the time attending religious services.
- Besides, you don't understand the service anyway.

Critical Response

- If religion is an important part of your host culture or host family's life, they will likely want to share it with you.
- Talk to your host family; say you are unused to attending religious services.
- Be aware that some cultures are very sensitive about religious/spiritual beliefs; if you are a non-believer, it is often better to not expose yourself as one.
- Find the opportunity for learning; see if there is a book you can follow during the service.
- Consider asking to go on special occasions only.

Tricky Scenarios Study: Can't Disconnect [Slide #3]

- You are getting along with your host family, but your family in the US misses you terribly.
- Your mom in the US has been texting you daily.
- Even your best friends in the US keep sending you messages on social media and Snapchat.
- You really want to enjoy your AFS experience but feel torn between the US and your host country.

Critical Response

- Establish clear boundaries with your US connections – both family and friends; tell your host family you are working on the issue.
- Create a communication schedule (ex: 30-minute FaceTime with parents on the last Saturday of each month) and stick to it by adding it to your calendar.
- Be sure to let your host family know about your communication schedule, so they will know when/how often you are communicating and can help you to reduce overcommunication.
- Tell your liaison if issues persist; they can contact AFS, who can discuss the situation with your parents.
- Remember that limiting communication helps you to adjust.

Tricky Scenarios Study: I Can't Eat This! [Slide #4]

- **You don't consider yourself a picky eater, but you like to eat healthy foods.**
- **Your host mother is trying, but everything seems greasy and not very appetizing.**
- **You're losing weight because you're not eating.**

Critical Response

- Ask to go along on trips to the store so you can pick healthy foods you'd like to eat.
- At the grocery store, be sure to observe the cost of food locally and the different food options.
- If healthy things are more expensive to purchase, try to help pay for them.
- Offer to cook your preferred/favorite dishes for your host family.
- Talk to your host family about your food preferences.

Tricky Scenarios Study: School Struggles [Slide #5]

- **The language is more difficult than you thought.**
- **The school subjects are over your head.**
- **Your grades are awful.**
- **You think that this may impact your college chances at home.**

Critical Response

- Before departure, ask your US high school if they will accept any of your classwork abroad for US credits.
- Talk with your host school and find out if you are being graded. Ask if it is possible to get a pass/fail grade.
- Ask your host family, local volunteer and host school about additional language learning classes.
- Keep your local volunteer informed of your progress; they may be able to discuss your courses with the school.

Tricky Scenarios Study: Parent Problems [Slide #6]

- Your host parents do not approve of the friends you have chosen.
- You feel that your host parents are too protective and strict.
- You want to hang out with your friends after dinner, but your host parents won't let you.
- You want to go shopping at the market alone, but your host family won't let you.

Critical Response

- Many US students may feel that parents have no right to say who they befriend.
- Some cultures place a high value on social status.
- AFS participants must understand that host parents are operating within their own cultural norms.
- In many cultures, the behavior of children reflects upon the reputation of the family.
- Many US students may feel stripped of their autonomy.
- Many cultures give adolescents less independence than they have in the US.
- Host parents may be cautious since they don't know your level of responsibility and ability to navigate the local area.
- In many cultures, females and males are much more segregated and do not mix socially.
- Even just talking with strangers of the opposite gender, publicly or privately, may be considered a sign of having a sexual/romantic relationship, which could have a negative social impact on participants and host families.

Tricky Scenarios Study: That's my stuff! [Slide #7]

- Your 12-year-old host brother is coming into your room and playing with your belongings.
- Your host sister is borrowing your clothes without asking you.
- You close your bedroom door when you leave for school, but it's always open when you get home from school.

Critical Response

- Concept of "privacy" and "ownership" are culturally specific.
- In many cultures, if an item is not put away, it is public property and/or free for anyone to use.
- Asking permission is not culturally universal.
- Sensitivity is key; approach host parents and explain what you are used to and what you prefer.
- If unsure of how to do that, get advice from your local volunteer.
- Suggest a system for asking permission with your things and explain that it isn't a reflection about your feelings towards the person themselves. It's more just to help keep track of where things can be found/located.
- In many cultures, mothers oversee the cleaning and laundry. So, they may often go into your room to collect dirty clothes and clean while you are at school.
- Many US students may feel an invasion of privacy.
- If you feel unsure about your journal or other important/private/favorite items, keep them in a hidden place or locked in your suitcase.

Activity (Methodology)

Safety Discussion (Open forum, group discussion)

When to do the exercise

2nd

Time Needed: 15-30 Min

Materials: None

Group Size: Any size

Slide #: 8

Objectives

- Discuss the effect that cultural differences can have on the perception of behavior.
- Identify topics to address with their parents(s) before departure.
- List sources of support during difficult situations.

Overview

1. The 5 safety discussion questions can be read aloud from the Leader Guide and are listed below.
2. If using the optional PowerPoint, the 5 safety discussion questions are on slide #8.
3. Click the mouse 1x to show the first question. Repeat 4x.
4. Be sure to debrief **with students after discussing all safety questions**.

Introduction

- Although there are many cultural differences all over the world, these rules are consistent throughout AFS.
- Rules are in place to keep students safe.
- For students who have completed Culture Trek, can you remember what the AFS rules are? (*no hitchhiking, no drugs, no driving*)
- All AFS rules and guidelines will be reviewed at the end of the day.

Discussion questions [SLIDE #8]

1. What are some common risky behaviors or situations that affect teens in the US?
2. What risky behaviors or situations might you have seen or experienced?
3. How could you handle those issues when you are away on program?
4. What is the role of your natural parents in your safety and wellbeing while you on exchange?
5. Who or what can help you to make safe choices or deal with consequences of bad choices?

Debrief conclusions

1. Before you leave the US, you should speak with your parent(s) about their expectations for your behavior while on program.
2. AFS knows there will be ups and downs and encourages you to find learning experiences in all challenges and come to AFS for help and support.
3. 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.
4. 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 local AFS volunteers.
5. It is important to stick to an agreed-upon contact schedule with your friends and family in the US, to avoid interfering with your adjustment to life in your host country.
6. AFS-USA urges you and your parents to complete Culture Trek together and read all the online AFS resources specific to your host country before leaving the US.



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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