

## Chapter 1

### Introduction to Reentry

It is never too early to begin preparing for a return home from a study abroad experience. All too often one becomes bogged down in the monumental physical tasks of tying up loose ends, finding out where to store items while you go on one final trip, selling possessions, and packing bags. As departure time draws near, farewell parties, goodbye gifts (more packing), and fond goodbyes will probably fill your final days. The moments for reflecting on how you have grown and changed as the result of living overseas are usually few and far between.

Although you may not have noticed it, the odds are that you have changed and that your perceptions of things to come will be heightened because you have had the opportunity to live in another culture. Things like the changes that have taken place in your daily living patterns and academic relationships, the foods you've grown accustomed to eating, the games you've played, the clothes you've worn, the language you've spoken, and the people you've spent time with have probably had an effect on your identity and your global perspective.

The process of reentry to the United States can be easy or difficult and is usually related to how well an individual has integrated into his or her overseas environment. Frequently, the better adjusted one has become to an overseas lifestyle, the more difficult the readjustment to life back home. Expectations also play an important part in the adjustment process.

### Feelings of Transition

Transitions in life are often associated with loss of friends and family and changes in one's status or environment. The feelings of transition are often present when one moves overseas and when one returns home. For a moment, think back to the weeks before your move overseas. Most likely, you acknowledged that a major transition was imminent. Moving away from the United States, you probably expected to undergo a period of adjustment to a different environment and culture. Were you prepared to experience a period of disorientation, some frustration with the language, and missing friends back home as you adjusted to living overseas? These same feelings may resurface after your return home. It will be helpful for you to acknowledge this possibility and to prepare a strategy for coping with your feelings.

Once back in the United States, it is not unusual to feel alienated and have difficulties relating to American friends, family members, and your U.S. academic environment. The process of reintegrating yourself into the niche you left may leave you feeling overly tired, needing more sleep than usual, angering more easily and wishing it were immediately possible to move back overseas. These feelings are frequently present during transitions. They are normal, and many people experience them.

### Stages of Reentry

As mentioned above, preparing for the reentry process begins well before the actual trip back to the United States. If your situation has been ideal, you began thinking about some reentry issues even before you left the United States to study abroad. Weeks or months prior to your reentry, you will need to begin thinking about your return to the United States and moving away from your overseas experiences and friends. This *first stage of reentry can be called disengagement*. It is not unusual for disengagement to continue even after one has returned home.

*The second stage of the reentry process entails feelings of excitement and even euphoria about the prospect of returning home.* It usually begins at some point before departure, but some individuals might not feel excited until the moment they step off the plane. The duration of the second stage will vary depending on the individual. It may last merely days, a few weeks or, if you were miserable living abroad, didn't make any friends, and hated the food, it may last indefinitely! Should you fall into this latter description, you may not display any of the symptoms of reentry discussed below.

After a short time back in the United States, *some people enter the third stage of reentry, which is characterized by a dampened euphoria*. If you find yourself in this state, you may begin to experience the feelings of alienation, frustration and anger mentioned earlier. You may feel like an outsider—a foreigner in your own country—making observations and statements about things that Americans take for granted:

“I can’t believe how many kinds of soda there are!”

“There is so much space between the houses...”

“Look at how wide the roads are!”

If you are returning to the campus you left, you may be frustrated by what you perceive as a lack of consideration from your friends and the university staff with regard to new procedures, equipment, jargon, and faculty that appeared in your absence. You may even begin to wish that you were still overseas!

In fact, just as you may find yourself feeling on the fringe of American society, you are passing through the initiation rites of a minority group: returnees. Because most Americans have not lived overseas, it will be helpful for you to identify fellow returnees. They will be able to relate to your growing pains and can provide you with some needed support as you readjust to living at home.

*The fourth stage of reentry includes a gradual readjustment to life at home.* During this stage you will no longer be shocked by the variety you find on the supermarket shelves and be able to contain your comments concerning whatever else comes to mind. If you have difficulty filtering out the foreign words in your conversations (this may happen if you became accustomed to communicating in a bilingual environment overseas), you will find that your English-only conversational skills will improve during stage four. Most important, it is during this final stage that you will be able to begin to synthesize your overseas experience, make decisions about which aspect of your ‘international’ persona you would like to preserve, and perhaps adjust your values accordingly.

Remember, readjustment to coming back to the United States is a very personal journey. You may skip or combine the stages above. Also, as mentioned before, you may not experience any of these stages at all depending on the degree of integration you experienced in your study abroad program. At any rate, you should take the time to complete this workbook before coming home. You can plan to go through just two chapters a week until you finish.

The chapters that follow are designed to give you the opportunity to do some introspective thinking about your overseas experience, to begin to focus on the changes that have occurred during this period, and to help you through the stages of reentry. In Chapter 2, you will be asked to recall your expectations as you moved overseas, examining your adjustment to living overseas, and remember the coping skills you used to survive. Chapter 3 presents some case studies that will illustrate various points concerning readjustment and helps you put your emotional responses into perspective. Chapter 4 will help you cope with some changes that may have occurred at home and at school while you were gone. And finally, chapter 5 will assist you with the synthesis and integration of your international experience.


It is our hope that by reading this workbook you will be better prepared to find a niche when you return home and continue to grow and learn with the skills and wisdom you gathered from your overseas living experience.

## Chapter 2

### Evaluating Your Study Abroad Experience and Putting It into Perspective

In Chapter 1, you recalled briefly how prepared you were to experience a transition when you moved overseas. This chapter will jog your memory a bit further concerning the expectations you had for your move, the realities of your overseas lifestyle, and what you did to adjust to living overseas. Once you have a clearer picture of your personal adjustment process, you will be in a better position to recognize how you have changed since you left the United States. You will be better equipped to prepare yourself for your reentry experience and be able to apply some of the skills you developed in adjusting overseas as you make the transition to living once again in the United States.

Go back in time and remember...

 In the following section, check all the items that apply to you or provide the appropriate information:

1. What excited you about your impending move overseas?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> the opportunity to study overseas             | <input type="checkbox"/> living in a different culture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> speaking another language                     | <input type="checkbox"/> making new friends            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> developing professional skills for the future | <input type="checkbox"/> becoming more independent     |
| _____ (fill in)  |  |

2. What were your greatest reservations about moving overseas?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> studying in a different culture | <input type="checkbox"/> housing arrangements       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> speaking another language       | <input type="checkbox"/> making new friends         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> financial arrangements          | <input type="checkbox"/> leaving friends and family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> medical facilities              | _____ (Fill in)                                     |

3. Did you have expectations concerning the following items? What were they? Were your expectations met? If not, why not?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> academic environment                         | <input type="checkbox"/> communicating in another language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> housing                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> traveling                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> developing new relationships      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> keeping in touch with family/friends at home | <input type="checkbox"/> food                              |
| _____ (Fill in)   |  |

4. Try to remember your initial observations and experiences overseas. Were you surprised by anything you saw or experienced?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Use adjectives to describe your initial reaction to each item you listed in #4.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

6. How do you feel now about the items you mentioned in #4?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did studying abroad cause you to change your daily routine? How is it different from the daily routine you had in the United States before you moved?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you make adjustments in your attitude toward any of the following?

- punctuality                       spatial relations
  - noise                                       touching
  - privacy                                       independence
- (Fill in) \_\_\_\_\_

9. What were the three easiest adjustments for you to make? Next to each one, note the approximate length of time it took for you to make this adjustment:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ time to adjust: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ time to adjust: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ time to adjust: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What were the three most difficult adjustments for you to make? Next to each one, note the approximate length of time it took for you to make this adjustment:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ time to adjust: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ time to adjust: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ time to adjust: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Is there anything about your overseas experience that you were never able to adjust to?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

12. What did you enjoy most about living overseas?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

13. Are there any customs, sports, styles of dress, foods, shopping patterns, etc. that you have adopted from your overseas culture?

At School

Socially

At Home

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

14. Will you be able to continue these practices or customs back in the United States?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. Have you picked up any greetings, gestures, or expressions that you have begun to use regularly? Please list them:


\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. How do you think your family, friends and professors will react to the items you listed in #13 and #15.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_


## Preparing for the Transition

The clearer you are in understanding the changes that are going to occur in your life when you return home, the more able you will be to cope with the transition. Think about the following topics and whether your life will be the same or different when you get back to the United States.

 Compare Your Lifestyle:	Overseas	In the United States
1. greetings	_____	_____
2. mealtimes	_____	_____
3. dress	_____	_____
4. concept of time	_____	_____
5. academic workload	_____	_____
6. shopping for food	_____	_____
7. pace of life	_____	_____
8. material concerns	_____	_____
9. responsibilities at home/school	_____	_____
10. status/prestige on campus	_____	_____

## Coping Skills for Adjustment

In questions #7 and #8 on page 5, you listed several adjustments you make to your cross-cultural living experience, and you recalled the approximate time that each took.

 What did you do to make these adjustments?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the skills that are appropriate when coping with cross-cultural adjustment are:

- Information seeking
- Observation
- Listening
- Patience
- Sense of Humor

What skills did you use in the actions you listed above:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

## Seeking out Support

It is likely that you had some assistance with settling in when you moved overseas. When you return home, you may not have anyone to help you adjust. And strange as it may seem, it might not be as easy for you to fit back in as you expect. If you have been with other American students overseas, it may be helpful for you to talk with them about the expectations, hopes and fears that surround your return to the United States. Once you return, you may want to establish a regular time when you get together, talk on the phone or Internet to share your reactions and observations. Other students who have studied abroad in different places may also make good partners in the reentry process. They will be interested in telling you about their experiences and will tend to be more interested in hearing about your overseas escapades than others who have not been abroad.

If you lived at home before going overseas you may have another issue to confront when you return home—that your family functioned very smoothly without you. By necessity, your family will have restructured their lives to get along without your assistance. The longer you have been gone, the more efficient your family is likely to have become in carrying out your responsibilities. When you return, you may sense that your place in your family unit no longer exists. If you picture your family as a mobile, with each individual representing one piece, you can begin to appreciate the rebalancing that must take place whenever a family member departs and returns.

Just as you may have asked many questions when you arrived overseas, plan to meet with individuals when you return who can fill you in on what has changed during your absence. While you may have sought out some Americans to spend time with overseas, when you return home, you may want to find others, like yourself, who have lived overseas as well as foreign nationals from your host country or other countries. These people may have an international perspective, and they may share some of your experiences and be able to offer support as you readjust to life at home. If you have acquired skill in a second language, you might also be able to keep up with it through these acquaintances.

The final chapter of “Robert Kohl’s Survival Kit for Overseas Living” (1979) suggests it is helpful to share some of the feelings you had while living overseas. Telling someone how an experience abroad made you feel will sound less like ‘bragging’ and may hold your friends’ and family members’ attention longer than pure descriptions. Be prepared to ask a lot of questions about whatever you need to know to fit back in—don’t be bashful! Just as with your overseas adjustment, the more information you have, the easier it will be for you to settle in.

## *Adjusting to Reentry*

Some possible adjustment issues are listed below; you may have encountered some of them when you moved overseas. As you make the transition back to the United States, you may face a number of these issues again or for the first time:

### **Cultural Adjustment**

- Identity problems
- Adjustment to changes in lifestyle (mealtimes, pace of life, concept of time, hired help)
- Family/community pressure to conform
- Adjustment to having friends and family near again
- Adjustment to changes in family and friends
- Adjustment to expectations of male/female roles

### **Adjustments at School**

- Change in daily academic routine
- Change in prestige or status
- Inability to communicate what you learned/experienced overseas
- Resistance to your suggestions by friends, family and faculty
- Feelings of superiority due to your foreign experience
- Jealousy on the part of friends who did not study abroad
- High expectations
- Adjustment to changes in the academic environment

### **Social Adjustments**

- Change in balance between individual needs/family and friends
- Feelings of social alienation as a result of living abroad
- Change in access to international publications, news and music
- Change in patterns of social interaction
- Frustration as a result of conflicting attitudes and values

### **Linguistic Adjustments**

- Acquired speech mannerisms/gestures misinterpreted by others
- Adoption of verbal/nonverbal codes not familiar to people at home
- Absence of colleagues who speak/understand your new ‘code’
- Unfamiliarity with new forms of communication/expressions at home

### **Educational Adjustments**

- Difficulty reconciling aspects of overseas education to the U.S. system
- Relevance of international education/language acquisition in the U.S. classroom
- Increased emphasis on extracurricular activities

The more realistic your expectations are about returning home, the more developed your strategies will be for coping with your transition and the symptoms of reentry, and the smoother your adjustment. The next chapter will suggest a way for you to evaluate your reactions to events once you return home.



## Chapter 3 *Coping With Stage Three of Reentry*

It is during the third stage of reentry that one most often begins to feel the growing pains characteristic of readjustment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, some of these ‘pains’ may include a sense of frustration, alienation and anger. You may even feel disgusted with certain behaviors and situations that you encounter in your interactions with Americans socially and in the classroom.

If you experience these feelings, it may be because you have become a cross-cultural person. If this is true, you have incorporated various cultural aspects or outlooks of your host country that differ from those of the United States. And so, in returning home, you may find yourself seeing things and responding to situations as an outsider—just as a native of your host country might feel coming to the United States for the first time. The anger and frustration you may feel represent the ‘clash’ of the two cultures coming together—inside you!

On the positive side, in stage three of reentry, you may have the opportunity to view some aspects of the culture of the United States as foreigners do. You may notice things you always took for granted, or become aware of behaviors you formerly exhibited without noticing them. You may be astonished at how much you have changed—or simply be happy to have the American way highlighted so that you can fit back in.

You may decide that you would like to retain some of what you absorbed culturally overseas and perhaps, to share it with other Americans. But first, it will be helpful for you to think of ways of coping with your reentry symptoms. This will better enable you to understand and utilize your personal growth while you were living overseas.

Fanchon Silberstine suggests that you not “get trapped by your own emotional reaction.” To help you separate what is really taking place in a given situation from your emotional response to it, Silberstein describes a three-step process of description, interpretation and evaluation.

For instance, let's say you have been studying a country where people have very formalized greeting patterns and take a long time to develop friendships. Social invitations, when extended, are sincere. You may have become used to these customs and have grown to appreciate the sincerity of your foreign friends and the expatriate community in your overseas home. When you return to school in the United States, many of your friends may no longer be on campus and you may be eager to meet new people. At a recent party, you spent the better part of the evening speaking with a guy whose name is John. At the end of the evening he said he had a great time hanging with you and he'll give you a call so you can get together again. You give him your number and tell him to definitely call you. Three weeks have now passed and you have still not heard from John. You feel let down and angry at his insincerity and you feel frustrated that you cannot seem to make new friends.

Now try to remove yourself emotionally from the scenario and evaluate what has happened:

1. *Describe (list) key events:*

I attended a party, met a cool American guy and spent most of the night hanging with him. He said he had a good time and wanted to get together again.

2. *Interpret the situation within its cultural context:*

Americans enjoy casual conversations with strangers at parties. It is not unusual for Americans to extend a casual invitation to someone they have enjoyed speaking with and not follow through on it.

3. *Evaluate and reassess your emotional response:*

John was not being insincere concerning his interest in getting together again. But, in the United States, casual invitations are not necessarily followed through on.

The following case study is about an American student who has studied overseas. Read the case study and try to apply the three-step process outlined above to separate the individual's emotional response from what actually happened.



## Exercise #1

Lee spent a semester studying in London, England. Before his study-abroad experience, Lee drove his car to campus every day and never took public transportation. In London, gasoline is very expensive and few students have their own cars. Everyone used public transportation. At first, Lee felt strange and poor not having a car. But soon he began to enjoy talking with his friends as they traveled together from one place to another. After a month, Lee actually began to enjoy not having to look for parking and pay car maintenance. It was much more relaxing to sit and talk or read, leaving the driving to someone else.

When he returned to the United States, Lee moved into a group house a few miles from the campus. He was happy to find that it was on the university shuttle line. As a student, Lee could ride the shuttle at no cost. He began to take the bus to campus everyday.

To Lee's surprise and dismay, his three roommates were constantly commenting about their 'weird' roommate who planned his day around the shuttle schedule. "If you drove, you could sleep 30 minutes more every morning." "Waiting for the bus would really be a pain. When I'm ready to go, I just go...not wait for a stupid bus," said another. "I don't want to rely on a bus," said the third roommate. Lee couldn't believe how lazy and stupid his roommates were. After three months of listening to them harass him about his love affair with the shuttle, Lee's frustration with his roommates hit the boiling point. Finally, he told them what he thought about their attitudes and behavior. They told him he ought to move back to London. Now he hardly speaks to his roommates.

1. Describe (list) key events:

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2. Interpret the situation within its cultural context:

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3. Evaluate and assess Lee's emotional response:

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Lee had the opportunity to experience living in a country with a good public transportation system used by the majority of people in the city. Although he had been like his roommates before studying in London, Lee's cross-cultural experience changed his behavior. Now, Lee places less importance on his independence and appreciates public transportation. He realized how car-orientated and independent most Americans are.

Lee has focused his new awareness of the benefits of public transportation on his roommates' behavior, and he is offended by their response. It might be unrealistic of Lee to think that his friends can change their attitudes without having an experience similar to his. His friends are probably not lazy and stupid. Their dependence on personal transportation is typical in most cities of the United States. Rather than attack his roommates' behavior personally, it might be more effective for Lee to describe how he felt about having to take public transportation when he first arrived in London and how his feelings changed over time.

### Exercise #2 (Your story)

This is for you to use. Write a real scenario—one that happened to you overseas. After you write the history, analyze it using the three-step method that you have practiced. You may find this process useful in working through some frustrating events that take place after you return to the United States.

### *Summary*

This chapter has introduced you to some of the feelings you may have when you reach stage three of the reentry cycle. It has also provided you with a three-step analytical process that you can use to separate your feelings and to evaluate unsettling situations more objectively. The more you understand your reactions, the easier your readjustment will be. Chapter 4 will further prepare you for the changes you may face when you return home.



## Chapter 4

### What Has Been Going on Back Home?

As you prepare to transplant yourself back in the United States, it is important for you to begin focusing on what has happened back home in your absence. Even if you do not perceive differences within yourself, you can be fairly certain that there have been changes in the lives of your friends and relatives in the United States. If you are returning to the same community, you may also be surprised by changes that have taken place in your neighborhood. And you can be certain that the American culture will have sprouted some nuances unfamiliar to you.



Take a moment to jot down some things that you know have changed back home:

Family Changes

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Friends' Changes

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Changes on Campus

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Community Changes

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Changes in American Culture

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If you have maintained good contact with people back in the United States, you may be able to fill in all of the blanks above. However, don't be too hard on yourself if you have just discovered that you don't know what has been going on at home (you have been pretty busy adapting to your life overseas).

No matter how good one's intentions are, it is very difficult to keep up with changes when you are gone. Before you return, it will be a good idea to prepare yourself for the process of catching up when you get back to the United States.

What steps can you take to fill in the blanks? You can begin by making a list of questions to ask. The checklist below lists some items you may want to find out about.

#### **Changes Among Family and Friends**

- New partners
- Marriages/divorces
- Births
- New living arrangements
- Illnesses
- Deaths
- Career changes
- Graduations

#### **Changes on Campus**

- New faculty
- New equipment/technology
- New procedures
- New buildings
- New jargon
- Different living situation
- Relocation of departments
- Changes in graduation requirements

#### **Changes in the Community**

- New neighbors
- New roads/parking
- New shopping areas
- New buildings
- Public transportation; routes, rates

#### **Changes in American Culture**

- Slang expressions
- New movies
- New TV programs
- Fad clothing
- Music

Chapter 2 discussed coping skills commonly used by people during the adjustment process. Of those skills, information seeking, observation, and listening will be most useful to you as you fill in the knowledge gap created by your absence. As mentioned, it will be helpful to identify individuals who will function as informants to bring you up-to-date once you get home. If you have saved the letters of your friends and family, you can reread them to refresh your memory about what has been happening in their lives during this period. Using the list above, you might want to make notes about what to ask specific individuals when you see them again.

As you progress through the various stages of reentry adjustment, it is important to keep in mind that any disorientation, frustration or stress that you may feel is normal and temporary. Keep in mind that the factors influencing stress include the extent of change you face, the unexpectedness of the changes, the realization that you have changed. Having realistic expectations about what is in store for you and a basic plan for meeting your readjustment needs will help you to settle back into life in the United States and cope with the stress often associated with readjustment. Chapter 5 will provide suggestions for addressing the “new you.”



## Chapter 5

### *The New You: What to Do with Your International Experience*





This workbook has taken you through a series of exercises to highlight the transitions you made in moving overseas, pointed out the skills you have used, and prepared you for your return to the United States. In this process, it is possible that you have begun to recognize some personal behaviors or values. If you have changed, at some point in the future you will have to decide what to do with the knowledge you gained from living overseas and what to do with the “new you.”

In Chapter 2, you listed adjustments you made in your attitude toward a variety of topics. Perhaps these adjustments merely helped you to cope with your overseas environment. In this case, you may find that it will be easy to readjust to American attitudes once you return home or that you may go through a temporary period of readjustment.





It is possible, however, that some of your fundamental attitudes or values have actually changed. Your association with Europeans, Asians, Africans, Australians, New Zealanders, or Latin Americans may have altered your perspective on a variety of topics. You may have altered your perspective on a variety of topics. You may have

become accustomed to hearing more about international news or to listening to foreign music, and you may want to pursue these interests even after you have returned home. It is possible that, as your roots have spread, they have also lengthened. Part of you may want to remain anchored in your international home and you will want to find ways to enable this to happen. Here are a few suggestions:


### Before You Return

-  Gather e-mail addresses/phone numbers and home addresses of friends and faculty you may need to contact.
-  Write down favorite recipes.
-  Decide what mementos of the culture you would like to take home.
-  Check on how to subscribe to, or get the website for publications you would like to continue reading.

### Once You're Back

-  Locate an international magazine store or a library that carries journals with news on the country or region that interests you.
-  Establish contacts with individuals from your international home.
-  Locate websites and chat rooms about people from that culture.
-  Stay in contact with CIS and volunteer as a peer advisor for new applicants (The new students always want to hear your stories and see your pictures).

### Skills for Your Future

 Once again, take a moment to think about the skills you have developed overseas. Some of the following may apply to you.

- Increased human relations skills
- Ability to interact with diverse individuals and groups
- Tolerance
- Creative problem-solving
- A cross-cultural perspective
- Second-language proficiency
- Expanded world view

Do you have any other newly acquired skills to add to the list?

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Now take another moment to think about what you may have learned during your time overseas:

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Personal growth and understanding can be a key benefit of studying abroad. As mentioned in the opening chapter, your cross-cultural learning doesn't cease when you return home. You will continue to grow as you become reacclimated. It is a good idea to begin now to think about how you have grown as the result of your overseas experience.

Once you have settled back into life in the United States, you might want to take another look and add to your list of changes.

## *Applying Your Experience on Campus*

Your international experience can make you a much more valued member of the campus community. For instance, you may be able to add important cross-cultural information to classroom discussions. Your second-language proficiency may also prove valuable in communicating with international students or visitors. Even minimal second-language skills and the knowledge that you have lived in someone's country or region may be helpful in establishing rapport and helping visitors feel more at home.

Depending on the situation, you might want to make yourself available for a brown-bag-lunch discussion about the institution you attended or other topical issues. This will give you a chance to share your experience with others, and it will give them a chance to ask you questions as well. A meeting of this nature can do a great deal to heighten the awareness of other students and faculty about overseas academic institutions, standards of living, etc.

Having made the transition overseas, you will be able, if you choose, to be a resource for CIS and others on your campus who are thinking about living overseas. In fact, you will be able to assist these future sojourners in developing realistic expectations concerning their impending moves. You may also be helpful in assisting international students on your campus as they undergo the transition of living in the United States. You may discover that some of your reentry observations are similar to their initial reactions concerning life in the United States.

## *Applying Your Experience in Your Community*

Having had the experience of studying in a foreign country, you probably know how difficult it can be to make foreign friends and experience a foreign culture from the "inner-circle." Your reentry experience may make it easier for you to understand the adjustments that people from other countries face when they move to the United States. Home hospitality is a very special way of sharing across cultures. Once you are settled, you might decide to extend your hospitality to international students living near your community.

Other community activities can involve organizing, promoting or participating in international arts and crafts fairs, international food bazaars or international film festivals. Another possibility could be to facilitate the development of educational or professional linkages between your U.S. community and the community you lived in overseas. Some cities belong to Sister Cities International, a nonprofit organization that facilitates such relationships.

If you would like to establish contacts with people from your overseas country or other countries, a variety of options will be available to you. Check to see if your city has a Council for International Visitors (CIV). If so, find out what services they offer. You might be able to encourage your family to register with the council to host a foreign visitor for dinner or for a weekend. Perhaps you could host a visitor whose profession is similar to your major or to the profession of one of your parents. You might even go so far as to host an exchange student for Thanksgiving or another holiday.

## *Applying Your Experience Professionally*

Two things you will want to keep in mind as you assess your new skills are your resume and job interviewing, especially if you decide to look for an international career. Interpersonal and multicultural skills are highly regarded in any profession and you will want to point out your proficiency on your resume and in interviews. What is helpful is to include a section on your resume stating your study abroad experience. This usually strikes up interesting conversations between you and the interviewer. Also, you will want to point out how you have kept in contact with the culture since your return to the United States as well as any other skills you discovered with this workbook. If you want help in presenting this information professionally do not hesitate to contact CIS. We will be happy to talk with you about your interests and concerns. Resources for helping you with resumes, cover letters and interviews can be found at our Web site [http://www.studyabroad-cis.com/Navbar/Who\\_are\\_you/alumni.htm](http://www.studyabroad-cis.com/Navbar/Who_are_you/alumni.htm). There are also resources for finding work, travel, volunteering and educational opportunities internationally. CIS also assists prospective students in finding and applying to master's and doctoral degree programs overseas. You can find out more about this at our full degree Web site: [www.degreesabroad-cis.com](http://www.degreesabroad-cis.com).

### *New Perspectives: To Share or Not to Share*

The decision to try to share or not to share an international perspective is a very personal one that only you can make. You may find that it is not easy to communicate some of the new perspectives you have. Don't be surprised if friends and colleagues who have not experienced coming home from another culture become defensive if you try to describe observations similar to those of the case study in Chapter 3. People may feel that you have become anti-American!

If you do want to communicate your thoughts, try to put your comments into perspective for others by describing the differences between where you have been and what it is like to be back. Juxtapose the differences and try to describe how it feels to be back home. Your comments may help to broaden the perspectives of others who have not been fortunate enough to experience another culture firsthand. You may also have the opportunity to dispel stereotyped statements when you hear them by giving firsthand examples of your own.

#### *Bon Voyage!*

*By completing the exercises in this workbook, you have begun to prepare yourself for your adjustment back to the United States. Although the end of your overseas stay is drawing near, your cross-cultural opportunities are far from over. You have had the chance to grow overseas and now you will have the chance to grow back home as well. Good luck and bon voyage!*

## Suggested Readings

Austin, C. N. *Cross-Cultural Re-Entry; A Book of Readings*. Abilene TX: Abilene Christian University, 1986.

Hess, J. D. *The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1994.

Holm, B. *Coming Home Crazy*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 1990.

Kauffman, N. L., J. N. Martin and H. D. Weaver with J. Weaver. *Students Abroad—Strangers at Home: Education for a Global Society*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1992.

\*Kepets, D. *Back in the USA: Reflecting on your study abroad experience and putting it to work*. Washington, DC: NAFSA Association of International Educators, 1995.

\*Peace Corps. *Peace Corps Odyssey: The Voyage Home*. Washington, DC: Peace Corps Returned Volunteer Services, Office of Domestic Programs, 1997.

Smith, C. D. (Ed.). *Strangers at Home: Essays on the Effects of Living Overseas and Coming "Home" to a Strange Land*. Bayside, NY: Aletheia Publications, 1996.

\*Storti, C. *The Art of Coming Home*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997.