

# “DECIDING TO GO” CHECKLIST

It helps to make a checklist as you are contemplating a short-term mission trip. For some of you, the trip is a new idea. For others, it has been in your mind for years. Whatever your situation, it helps to put your thoughts down on paper. Add your own questions to the categories below ~ personalize this checklist to help you make your decision.

## **What is the Lord saying?**

The most important question comes first. Think back to your first thoughts of this short-term mission trip and the things you have considered since. Ask the Lord to show you His mind in this matter.

## **Is the direction I am leaning scripturally supported?**

Test your sense of the Lord's directions against scripture.

## **Would the community of believers that I am involved with be supportive of my decision to go or not to go?**

When you have heard the Lord and tested His personal Word to you against the Bible, share it with those in your community of believers. They may have insight on whether you are making a decision in your own effort based on your emotions, or whether it is from God.

## **Will my family and friends support me?**

While it is not essential to have their approval, it certainly helps and it is wise to consider their advice and discuss the “whys” of your interest with them. Good communication on your part will strengthen bonds you already have with these important people.

## **When is the best time to go?**

You have the right message, but do you have the right time? The two are not always the same.

## **How will I pay for it?**

If the Lord wants you to go on this trip, He'll help you pay for it. List your possible sources of income and ask the Lord for the game plan.

## **Do I have as much information about this trip as possible?**

Talk to someone who has already been there and ask them what the experience was like and what advice they might have.

# FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Sarasota Baptist Short-Term Missions is an experience in faith for all who participate. Individuals must exercise their faith in believing the Lord is leading them to go on a trip and that faith must be exercised throughout every aspect of the mission experience. Trusting the Lord to supply the funds necessary for their trip is one of those aspects that an individual does by faith, and it is a wonderful opportunity to have their faith increased and developed as they see God move on their behalf.

It is the stated policy of the Missions Department that each individual who chooses to participate as a member of a short-term mission team, will be responsible and accountable for raising the amount of funds required for their personal travel, daily living expenses, and their portion of any general team expenses that are necessary for the team to fulfill their ministry. The specific amount of money required for each individual will be provided at the initial planning meeting for each trip. A general estimate is available in the Short-Term Missions Brochure.

We believe that if the Lord wants an individual to go on a short-term mission trip and that individual does everything they are required to do by the Missions Department in regards to fund-raising that the Lord will supply the funds necessary to fulfill their obligations and commitments. Therefore, each individual is strongly encouraged to submit this aspect of the program to the Lord and to totally trust Him to be the source of the funds required.

The following policies and procedures are offered to ensure that each individual fully understands their personal financial responsibilities in regards to the Missions Department as well as to ensure consistency and equity in the application of the financial policies.

## **Mission Department Responsibilities**

Each applicant will be fully informed of their personal responsibility for raising the specified amount by the Missions Office and/or Team Leader.

All applicants will be reminded that failure to meet the financial requirements as outlined in these Financial Policies and Procedures may result in them not being able to participate on the short-term mission trip.

The **Team Leader** conducts the team's orientation session and will ensure that these financial policies and individual responsibilities are fully covered during the orientation session.

The team's **Financial Secretary** in conjunction with the Mission Department will prepare timely and updated financial reports for each individual, as well as the team, and will make these reports available to the Team Leader prior to each meeting.

It is the **Team Leader's** responsibility to discuss the financial status of each individual and the team during each team meeting. Financial deadlines will be reviewed and those individuals who are behind in their fund-raising will be reviewed on an individual basis.

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## Individual Fund-Raising

The primary method of raising funds for an individual's trip is through writing letters and requesting people to contribute to the ministry of that individual while on the mission trip. Experience has shown that this type of fund-raising has many advantages, including being a great opportunity to witness to non-believers who support them. Through your letters you also increase the total number of people who are involved in the team and the mission. Another very important aspect of writing letters is that it forces an individual to be totally dependent on the Lord to lead others to contribute to their mission trip and therefore helps to accomplish the goal of building their faith.

The following policies govern fund-raising and the individual's responsibilities:

- All participants will fully comply with all the fund-raising policies established for the Mission and will do all that is required by those policies to raise the specified amount for their trip.
- Participants may send letters requesting support to any individual they wish, but **are strongly encouraged to send letters to people *OUTSIDE* of the Sarasota Baptist Church family, i.e. work contacts, friends, family. Make sure that they make the check out to Sarasota Baptist Church but send their donation directly to YOU. This is so you will know who donated in case you would like to send a Thank You. Then send the check to the Missions Dept.** The Missions Dept. is not allowed to give the names of donators out because of privacy reasons.
- All support letters are to be sent with the express purpose for soliciting contributions for expenses directly related to the mission trip only. *Under no circumstances are individuals permitted to seek financial assistance for personal use or funds to offset possible income losses that may occur as a result of participating on the mission trip.*
- Each participant is required to submit a \$150 deposit with their application for their trip and this amount must be submitted no later than the first team training session after orientation. The Team Leader and the Missions Pastor must approve any exceptions to either the amount or the deadline. It is also understood that this deposit is **TOTALLY non-refundable and non-transferable** in the event an individual must cancel their participation on the mission trip, at any time after the deposit has been made, or if a mission trip is canceled for any reason.
- Each individual is personally responsible for the payment of any fees and expenses required for the following.
  - 1) Passport
  - 2) Passport Photos
  - 3) Immunizations
- All personal items such as clothing, toiletries, prescriptions, etc., required for the trip, and anything personally donated towards supplies or to be used by the team while on the field, will **not** be considered as an expense included in the trip's cost.

## Financial Assistance Requests

Applicants are expected to raise 100% of their financial needs; however, we have a limited amount of scholarships available for those members who qualify. There are several elements that make up what funds are available for assistance to any individual: cash flow of mission's offerings, the Missions budget, as well as the individual needs of the person requesting assistance. *No one* should assume that the dollars will be allocated for their trip just because they are asking. All assistance will be weighed on a case-by-case basis.

Financial Assistance Requests should adhere to the following Team meeting schedule:

- Week 1 - Financial Assistance Request forms distributed.
- Week 2 – Financial Assistance Request forms returned to Team Leader.
- Week 3 – The Missions Pastor/Missions Office review and make decision for approval or decline.
- Week 4 – Financial Assistance Request forms returned to Team Leader for distribution.

## Married Couples

Married couples that are participating on the same team can elect to either send individual fund-raising letters or they may send joint letters requesting support for both individuals. However, it is understood that contributions must be credited according to the instructions of the donor. If contributions are received and the donor has designated the support for both individuals, those funds will be equally divided between both individuals. If contributions are received and the donor has designated the support for only one of the individuals, those funds will be fully credited to that individual designated by the donor. In the case of individual illness, or family emergency the funds will be directed to the spouse's account that is still participating in the trip. Should illness or a family emergency occurs for an individual who has paid for their trip from their *own* financial resources, every effort will be made to return as much of their paid funds as possible. Each case will be weighed on a case-by-case basis. Always keep in mind that one person backing out of a trip could "possibly" increase the expenses for the other team members' airfares, transportation, etc., higher.

The account for each individual will be considered independently and all financial policies will apply to each individual. The Mission Pastor must approve any deviation from this policy.

## Dates and Deadlines

Although specific dates will vary from team to team, the date when non-refundable airline tickets must be purchased for the team's travel is critical in the fund-raising process. These dates will be outlined in each team's **Activities and Deadline Schedule**. The Missions Office will review the financial status of each individual and the team prior to purchasing airline tickets to ensure that adequate funds are available to cover the expenditure. The following policies and procedures will apply:

1. Each individual must raise at least 50% of the trip's expense or the cost of the airline ticket (if more than 50%) thirty (30) days prior to departure. The specific date will be stated in the team's Activities and Deadline Schedule.
2. **Those individuals, who have not raised at least 50% of their funds by that date, will not have an airline ticket purchased for them.** All funds raised by these individuals will then be added to the "team bucket" for supplies for the trip. It is **IMPERATIVE** that the individual who is not participating in the trip contacts their donors to explain the circumstances and how their donations will be allocated. Deducted from this amount will be any costs already expended by the church in the expectation of their participation (e.g., airline deposits).
3. Those individuals who are borderline (50% - 70%) will be allowed to continue on the team and have their tickets purchased if:
  - (a) the team's total finances are sufficient to cover the purchase of all the remaining team member's tickets.
  - (b) they have permission of both the Team Leader and Missions Pastor.

It is the policy of the Missions Department that teams must raise all of the necessary funds prior to their departure. A week-to-week review will be made by the Team Leader and Missions Pastor, if necessary, to monitor the team's financial status. In the event a team's total funds are not sufficient to cover all of the expenses of the individual team members by the end of their training, the following action will be taken:

All funds for those participants who find it necessary to withdraw from the team at any time, either at their own initiative or for the reasons stated above, will be used to assist the team in purchasing supplies or may be transferred to another team member. Deducted from this amount will be any costs expended by the church in expectation of their participation (e.g., airline deposits and tickets, ministry supplies, food, lodging, in-country transportation costs, etc.) **This does not apply to those funds that are stated in advance as being non-refundable.**

## Team Fund-Raising

Each fund-raiser must be approved by the Missions Department prior to any advertising, ticket sales, or expenses incurred in support of the team fund-raiser.

All arrangements such as the date, time, location, ticket sales, etc., must be coordinated through the Missions Department. **Under no circumstance** should team participants make independent commitments and arrangements without prior approval from the Missions Department. **Under no circumstance** should any team member write a letter to a business for financial support or team supplies without prior consent from the Team Leader. Please allow your Team Leader to coordinate all outside contacts. Secular companies should not be solicited for their support when their business is contrary to our own beliefs and convictions.

Teams may conduct off-campus fund-raisers. These fund-raisers must have prior approval from the Missions Department before any commitments or arrangements are made.

All gross receipts from a fund-raiser should be turned in to the Missions Department via the Team's Financial Secretary, who will then submit them to the Financial Office to be credited to the team's account.

## Financial Overages

All funds raised by individual team members and by the team must be spent in conjunction with the specific team trip and ministry.

A final team and individual account report will not be available until after the team has returned from their trip and all receipts and expenses have been accounted for. This must be done within sixty (60) days after the return date of the mission trip. No monies will be paid for any trip expense after this sixty (60) day period has passed.

In the event an individual raises more funds than are required for their participation on the team, the following policies will be in effect:

- No refunds will be given for the excess amount raised.
- All excess funds may be used for personal expenses (passports, visas) other than those specifically noted in the Financial Policies and Procedures.

In the event a team ends up in an overage position (total income exceeds total expenses), the following policies will be in effect:

- All excess funds must be spent in conjunction with the specific team trip and ministry.
- All excess funds will be sent to the Pastor/Missionary of the area where the team ministered and will be used at their discretion for the furtherance of the ministry in that area.
- In the event, the team as a whole, would like to designate the excess funds, or any portion thereof, to a specific need within the area they ministered, that request will be made to the Pastor/Missionary at the time the funds are forwarded.

These Financial Policies and Procedures are in effect for all short-term mission teams. Any alterations, amendments, exceptions, etc., will be reviewed by the Missions Department and approved by the Missions Pastor prior to implementation.

# FUND-RAISING LETTER INFORMATION\*

## Prospective Donors

1. Create a list of donors with names and addresses.
2. Letters should **not** be sent to Sarasota Baptist Church members (exceptions to this policy should be directed to the Team Leader or the Missions Department for approval prior to a letter being sent.)

## Elements of Your Letter

1. All checks are to be made payable to Sarasota Baptist Church.
2. All donations are tax deductible as long as checks are made payable to Sarasota Baptist Church.
3. Personal checks should include the recipient's name and team destination on the memo line. Please instruct donors to send the donation **to your home** in the self-addressed stamped envelope you provide. **You are responsible for turning in all monies to your designated Trip Financial Secretary with your name clearly indicated on all checks or envelopes.**
4. In your letter, be sure to indicate a deadline date when you wish to receive these funds. That date should fall *before* the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) Team Meeting. You should also indicate that in the event that you may not be able to participate, their donation will then go to either assist other team members or in the "team bucket" of funds for supplies for the mission trip.

## Other Important Information

### About Cash:

1. Cash is to be placed in an envelope with the donor's name and address clearly printed on the front along with the name of the recipient and the team he/she is on.
2. Do not write your personal check for cash given to you.

### About Personal Checks:

1. *For tax purposes, checks should not be made out to you personally, but to Sarasota Baptist Church.*

### About Your Donor Envelopes:

1. Clearly print your return address with trip destination on the envelope, which is enclosed with your letter.
2. Please turn all monies in directly to your Team Leader/Trip Financial Secretary.

\*See sample letter provided in "Forms" Section.

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# SHORT-TERM INSURANCE COVERAGE

- Sarasota Baptist Church will purchase insurance for you through Adams & Associates International.
- The plan is designed for individuals under the age of 85 traveling outside the United States.
- Toll-free, multilingual assistance is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help in locating.
- English speaking physicians and attorneys are available to facilitate the direct payment of claims to the providers of covered medical services.

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# IMMUNIZATION & TRAVEL COUNSELING SESSIONS

All mission team members, if desired, should have their immunizations by the third team meeting. Each mission team member will be responsible for any vaccines they receive. Vaccines may vary from \$15.00 - \$130.00 for each inoculation.\*

Any individual under the age of 18 must have the consent form signed by a parent or legal guardian.

\*Recommended shots per location can be obtained by calling the Sarasota County Health Department @ (941) 861-2771, or on the International Mission Board's website [www.imb.org/medinfo](http://www.imb.org/medinfo).

# MISSION TEAM TRAVEL PROTOCOL

- All team members will dress modestly (in team shirts if acquired) while en route to and returning from the Mission City. No exceptions.
- All team members will “look out” for each other in regard to luggage, passport checks, and security.
- When in the airports or airplanes, “look out” for each other’s carry-on baggage and personal items.
- Be aware of where the other team members are at all times. When you must leave the group, leave with another team member, **NOT BY YOURSELF**.
- **Never, never** leave your Passport or tickets with anyone; keep these with you at **ALL** times.
- Several times en route you will need to show your Passport or identification with your airline tickets – **always keep these together**.
- The team will have a fun and enjoyable trip if all of these things are kept in mind.

# POLICY ON COMMUNICATION WITH HOST

It is the policy of Sarasota Baptist Church Missions Department that all correspondence between SBC and the hosts concerning team ministry, team logistics, church commitments and any other business related matters, is the sole responsibility of the Team Leader and Missions Department. Church members and team members should not communicate with the hosts on an individual basis concerning any of these areas without the prior approval of the Missions Department.

Due to the large amount of work and planning that is involved with each team, it is essential that the Missions Department coordinate, and be kept informed of all arrangements, logistics, and ministry involved with each team. In order to successfully coordinate each trip and make it the most productive it can be, individuals must not take it upon themselves to request any additions, deletions, or changes involving team ministry, and/or logistics with the host. All such requests and suggestions must be directed to the Team Leader.

It is also understood that a copy of all *non-personal* correspondence between church members, Team Leaders, team members, and the host, will be forwarded to the Missions Pastor. These copies can be sent in any of the following ways:

**Fax Number:** (941) 922-9421

**E-Mail:** [rboatwright@sarasotabaptist.com](mailto:rboatwright@sarasotabaptist.com)

**Address:** Sarasota Baptist Church  
Missions Department  
7091 Proctor Rd.  
Sarasota, FL 34241

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# TEAMWORK FACTOR

Just what does teamwork mean? What are the traits of a team player? We have come up with fourteen words that form the basis of what we call the **Teamwork Factor**. Traits exhibited by those who are pitching in to do their part for the benefit of the group.

## **T**eachable

A teachable spirit creates a non-competitive environment in which learning and sharing come naturally. Teachability gives all members the freedom to make mistakes as they learn.

## **E**ncouraging

Encouraging words enhance the development of a community. What differences do they make?

## **A**ppreciative

What can we appreciate in others on the team? How can we show our appreciation?

## **M**otivated

Take initiative! Do all things as unto the Lord! (Colossians 3:17, 23)

## **W**illing

Team members may have different levels of strength, skill and health, but each should be willing to work to the best of his/her capabilities. Willingness also includes accepting uncomfortable conditions in the host country. Willingly take on the heat, food, bugs, and germs.

## **O**pen

Be open with what you are learning, experiencing, feeling, thinking, etc. Express both the positive and negative. Your vulnerability with others builds community.

## **R**efreshing

The times may be tough: heat, sickness, exhaustion, physical labor, emotionally drained, and so on. In those times it will be incredibly refreshing to have another team member help pick up your spirit! Think about how you can replenish one another on a daily basis.

## **K**indred Spirit

There is a sense of camaraderie as we pursue this together. We are all part of the Christian family and we are all in this together!

## **F**lexible

Anything can change from day to day. A flexible team member will learn to accept the unexpected as the norm.

## **A**greeable

Living together in close quarters, sharing crowded bathing facilities and every other aspect of group travel requires everyone to be gracious.

## **C**ooperative

Share with one another, help and assist one another. Instead of grumbling about problems, propose solutions!

## **T**houghtful

What can you do to make a teammate's day a little easier?

## **O**bedient

There will be times when a Team Leader has to "pull rank" and make unpopular decisions. A team player will respect the leader's authority and encourage others to do the same.

## **R**elational

Get to know the others on your team. Go out of your way to learn about their hopes, their dreams, and their history.

## *Get the picture?*

The *Teamwork Factor* spells out the difference between a *group* of isolated individuals and a *team* of interconnected members.

• *Be the team member that you want others to be* •

# BEING A BRIDGE BUILDER

As a team member, you are “plopped” down in a culture quite different from your own. The behaviors, values, and beliefs of the people may differ greatly from those that are familiar to you. With time you may come to notice some common denominators between yourself and your hosts, although, the differences will hit you first. Cultural differences might be pictured in the following ways. There are two cliffs: on one side is your way of life and on the other is the way of life found in the host community. In between looms a large chasm. In order for the two cultures to meet and understand one another, a bridge must be built connecting the two sides.

Imagine your upcoming journey as an apprenticeship in bridge building. You can lay the beam, erect scaffolding, and forge cables that make communication between your worlds possible. Surprise your host community with your initiative at bridge building and you will find their hands joining yours.

Building the bridge involves a number of things you can think through before your departure, as well as others you can work on while you are there. Unfortunately, some people go on short-term missions and never work at building the bridge. They deprive themselves of some very important personal experiences, which tragically limit their understanding and curtails their growth.

Bridge building is an exciting challenge! In fact, you will come to appreciate the world it opens to you so much, that you will continue to build bridges for the rest of your life.

## Bridge Building Involves Examining Your Stereotypes

All of us maintain certain stereotypes about other people. Some are based on elements of truth. Others grow out of myths or false perceptions. It is unfair to judge or evaluate a person based on stereotypes about the group to which he or she belongs. God created individuals who are uniquely different, and should be treated as such.

Building the bridge begins with examining stereotypes: the ones you may hold, and the ones the nationals may hold about you. Think about them and list a few stereotypes you might have about your host country.

### Negative

Inefficient: needing help \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Positive

Interdependent with family \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When you arrive in the host community, you will be viewed in a certain way. Doesn't seem fair, does it? Could there be an element of truth in these views? Think about the stereotypes that follow, then answer the questions in the spaces provided.

## Negative

Aggressive  
Harshly pragmatic  
Tense  
Discontent  
Lonely  
Corrupt  
Wealthy and materialistic  
Dominating

## Positive

Educated  
Reliable  
Strong individuals  
Secured better lives  
Free of superstition  
Confident  
Organized

### **We are out to change the stereotypes others have of us.**

Loud and obnoxious  
Overbearing  
Competitive

Selfish/self-centered  
Attitude of national superiority  
Preoccupied with efficiency

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. As you look through this list, what is your reaction? How do you feel?
2. Which of these apply to you? Would others see these in you?
3. Do you feel that you hold some of the stereotypes listed towards the people in your host community? Which ones do you think may be valid? Why?
4. How might these stereotypes hinder the bridge-building process?

You cannot change where you are from. You will be perceived stereotypically from time to time. This is not all bad. Stereotypes can have some merit and facilitate understanding. But, as you know from experience, not every individual embodies all the characteristics of a particular stereotype. To be a bridge builder, you need to understand the reasons behind stereotypes. We bomb the bridge when we judge people without attempting to understand, or allow them a chance to explain themselves.

## Bridge Building Involves .... Remembering Your Roles

There are three “roles” you will play that contribute to your ability as a bridge builder ....

### The role of being a *guest* of the culture.

Think of being a guest in someone’s home. How would you behave, react, interact, etc.? Or conversely, what expectations would you have of a guest in your home? What might please and/or irritate you?

### The role of being a *student* of the culture.

Think of yourself as a person who is there to study and learn. How does a student get an “A” in school? What behaviors contribute to their success?

### The role of being a *servant* within the culture.

Think of being a person who serves everyone he or she encounters in the country. How does a servant approach those whom he or she serves? How does a servant handle differences in others?

⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘

***You are a guest,  
a student  
and a servant  
of your host’s culture!***

## Accepting

**Accept the fact** that you will not completely understand the people in just one trip. This is just a beginning; so do not become too frustrated with yourself.

## Awareness

**Be aware that at times** you may feel your prejudices. You may become frustrated with the way things are or the way people behave. Don't deny the feelings, own them. Only then can you begin to understand the reasons behind them. Why are you frustrated? Being aware will help you grow in understanding the differences.

## Listening

**Listen more than you talk.** You are there to learn not to instruct. The right to instruct is earned by demonstrating respect.

## Giving

**Give of yourself.** Take the initiative in group settings to reach out to the nationals. People can tend to shy away from contact with nationals, especially if they are not fluent in the language. Go ahead! Take a risk and try to speak the language. People will really appreciate the effort. And, don't worry; they'll forgive you when you mess up!

## Enjoying

**Enjoy the people, their culture, and their language.** If you do not take yourself too seriously, you can have more fun. Help create an environment where they can enjoy you, your culture, and your language just as you aim to enjoy theirs.

# BUILDING TEAM UNITY

## Purpose

To look at teamwork from God's viewpoint. To learn to function as a team, relying on each member to use his/her particular skill to help the team reach a common goal.

## Memory/Theme Verse

**“For we are laborers together with God...” I Corinthians 3:9a (NAS)**

Webster defines the word “team” as “the state of being one, singleness/the state of being made one, unification/full agreement, harmony/continuity of purpose, action, etc./an arrangement of parts capable of producing a concentrated total effect.”

## A Biblical Look at Team Unity

I Corinthians 3:6-9  
Colossians 3:12-17

- ♦ God uses different people, but God gives the increase.
- ♦ We need to work together as unto the Lord.

## Building Unity Through Prayer

Galatians 6:2  
Ephesians 6:18-19

Prayer Chain

Team Player

- ♦ Bear each other's burdens.
- ♦ Continue to pray that our team will have strength to share the Gospel.
- ♦ Develop a prayer chain. This will insure that each team member is lifted up in prayer daily, leading up to the project and beyond.
- ♦ Spend time praying for each other's needs, both related and unrelated to the project.

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## Building Unity Through Team Work

1. Review skills needed for your ministry objective.
  
2. How can we put our ministry skills into action here at home? You must be a missionary before you can go to the field. If you are teaching English, you can get involved teaching English in your local community. If you are going to be involved in evangelism, do some evangelistic outreach at home. If you are doing a construction team, find a local project to do before you go on your trip.

## Personal Response

1. List past situations in which you have had to act as part of a team. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. As a Christian, what teams are you automatically a member of? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where will your ministry team strength come from? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. My personal commitment to build team unity:  
Before the trip: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
During the trip: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# DO'S AND TABOOS

## Eating

When you are in another culture, eating becomes more than just a way to receive nourishment. It becomes a language all its own, and no words can match it for saying, “Glad to meet you ... thank you for letting me be here with you.”

Mealtime is no time for a “thanks–but–no–thanks” response. Acceptance of what is on your plate is extremely important to the acceptance of your host, the country, and the situation in which you find yourself.

Often, what is offered constitutes your host country’s proudest culinary achievements. Try to think how you would feel if a visitor in our country refused a bite of your homemade pie or a nice steak!

We often become squeamish not because of what we are eating, but the unfamiliarity with what it is. As a *hint* you might want to cut the item into small pieces. This helps minimize the texture. You can also try swallowing quickly.

## Take It Off ... or ... Leave It On?

What you do or do not wear can be worse than bad taste. Shoes are among the biggest offenders. Remember to notice if it appears that shoes need to be removed when entering a person’s home, or even some buildings. If you are unsure, ask your host. They will appreciate your attention to their feelings. Each culture has various reasons for why shoes are offensive. Be alert, and be sensitive.

Always and forever let your dress be modest, even if you are a little uncomfortable. Tight fitting clothing or too little clothing speaks loudly to the very people you are trying to win to the Lord.

**Remember your objective for the trip!** Comfort is not necessarily part of the deal. Refer to your *‘Release of Rights’*.

## Conversation

There are many things that are sensitive to people in another culture. Speaking negatively about their religion and their belief will immediately become offensive to those people. Remember to show interest in how they think and believe. When you win their respect and trust, you will then become an effective witness for Jesus Christ.

When you are talking about your job, your church, your family, etc., refrain from saying “I did” or “I know.” This will be as offensive to some cultures as it is to your friends at home.

## **International Misunderstandings!**

Remember that only Americans can really understand Americans. Be careful in using slang terms that do not really convey the meaning that you are trying to get across.

Idioms in our language can be a huge stumbling block to our foreign friends. Avoid using idioms in any form. Try to put yourself in the place of someone from another country, and see what would come to mind, as these phrases are used.

- I need it like yesterday!
- FYI
- Do you read me?
- It just won't fly
- Run of the mill
- Ball park figure
- Shotgun
- General rule of thumb
- The buck stops here
- Down the tubes
- Flat as a pancake
- 24/7
- Flying by the seat of your pants
- Coming up roses
- Don't make waves
- Keep a low profile
- Raining cats and dogs

## **Best Behavior**

What we would consider mildly as bad manners at home may be seen as cardinal sins to another culture. Some of those habits are:

- Gum chewing (especially during conversation)
- Talking with hands in pockets
- Legs propped up on furniture
- Backslapping
- Etc., etc., etc.

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## Gift Giving

Different gifts mean different things from culture to culture. Try to rely on the information given to you about your specific country. A good rule to go by in any situation is to keep it simple. Also, when giving the gift be sure to say to the host, "this is just a small way of saying thank you for having me/us here in your country/ministry." This simple comment can relieve the pressure on your host to give a gift back to you in return.

## Gestures – A Risky Language

Hand gestures and body language are risky forms of communications in a foreign country. Expressions on the face, and movements of the hands mean something totally different from one culture to the next. It will take practice on your part, but it is best to avoid them completely.

Listed below are some differences in the meanings of the same gestures.

- When you raise your eyebrows in Tonga, you are saying "yes" or "I agree". In Peru you have just said "money" or "pay me".
- The classic American "okay" sign (the fingers circled) is placed over the nose in Columbia to signify that the person in question is homosexual.
- In Britain a nose tap means secrecy or confidentiality, but in Italy, it is a friendly warning.
- In Greece, Italy and Spain a cheek stroke means "attractive". In Yugoslavia it means success, but in other cultures it means "ill" or "thin".
- In Germany using the gesture of a head screw means "you're crazy". It is often used by drivers on the autobahn to comment on the driving skills of other travelers. This gesture can get you arrested! This same gesture in Argentina would have no consequences.

**Point to be made – gestures are a dangerous ways to communicate what you want to say.**

## A Lot of Work?

**Yes, is the answer!** This seems to be a lot to remember, and to learn. However, the benefits of being culturally aware can make the difference in how your ministry is received in that country. It also leaves a lasting impression of our church and mission program.

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# COPING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

## **Culture Shock: A Definition**

A psychological disorientation that stems from unfamiliar cues and unmet expectations in a new culture.

## **Who is a Potential Candidate for Culture Shock?**

**You are!** Culture shock happens to everyone. It is only a problem if it is not anticipated and recognized. Many untraveled people are skeptical about it and they assume it is like a homesick kid at camp. They are wrong. It is not reserved for the weak or incapable, and if you think it is, your potential for major culture shock is great! Culture shock has little to do with intelligence.

## **What to Expect**

It is like taking an exam 24 hours a day. Or like a low voltage buzz that irritates and builds stress throughout the day.

## **How to Deal With It**

Learn what culture shock is, learn about yourself, learn about your host culture, and learn about your home culture. The more you know the less jolted by the shock you will be.

## **Know Culture Shock**

There are four phases, which are not sequential and are often repeated:

- ***Phase 1 – Enjoying the Mountaintop***  
Everything is quaint; the euphoria of your new experience blurs the cultural differences.
- ***Phase 2 – Down in the Valley***  
The new culture no longer fascinates you. Curiosity gives way to frustration. Feelings of irritation, anger, and helplessness join with fatigue to produce the classic symptoms of culture shock.
- ***Phase 3 – Climbing Out***  
Local ideas and practices do not seem strange any longer. Self-confidence returns and negative feelings subside.
- ***Phase 4 – Mountain Integration***  
Differences are understood and expected. Humor returns and you relax.

## **Tips for Climbing Out**

Increase your quiet times, focus on similarities, talk/pray out your feelings with someone you trust, LAUGH, journal at least one good thing everyday, stay busy, remember why God sent you there, remember what you have learned about the culture you are in.

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## Know Yourself

Remember that there is only one of you in this world and God has designed you this way on purpose. Do not try to make the people you meet in the new culture like you. Realize that people approach problem solving differently. Think about what type of problem solver you are. Are you an idealistic thinker who focuses on vision and outcome? Are you an observer or a participator? Basically, do what you can to understand yourself and remember the people in your new culture will be different. Always keep in mind, "Different is not bad, it is just different."

## Know Your Own Culture

Learn why you do the things the way you do in your own culture and be ready to explain them, but avoid comparisons! Your culture is just your culture. Your new country has a culture of its own. *Don't let your culture be an obstacle to being effective in a new culture.*

## Remember Your Role

You are a learner of a culture. It is your job to inculturate, not to change them. Spend a lot of time listening, asking questions, and learning. An attitude of a good learner not only helps you become more informed and adjust, but communicates servanthood to your host culture.

## Communicating Through an Interpreter

***YOU, not the interpreter, are the speaker.***

These are some key things you can do to ensure that your message gets communicated effectively:

1. Speak to the audience, not to the interpreter.
2. Speak loud enough to be clearly heard by your interpreter.
3. Speak slowly.
4. Think your ideas through ahead of time so you can say it in short simple sentences.
5. Avoid using slang words or phrases; your interpreter may not be familiar with such things.
6. Stop after every sentence to allow your interpreter to translate.
7. If you are talking about technical subjects and you wonder if they know what you mean, test their understanding by asking them a question or two about what you said.
8. If your interpreter gets stuck and does not know the word for something you are trying to say, it is often best to move on in the conversation so as not to embarrass your interpreter. If it is an important point, come back to it later.
9. You may assist your communications with sign language, similar to playing charades.

# WHAT IS RE-ENTRY?

Re-entry is similar to culture shock. Sometimes it is called reverse culture shock. In re-entry, you may feel “out of balance”. You are not the same as when you left so there are some adjustments. It is normal for people to go through some type of re-entry after an overseas experience. The following information is given should you experience any of them.

## Options for Coping with Re-entry Stress

There are different ways of coping with re-entry adjustments that you may go through after returning from a short-term mission experience. Three options of coping are explained below. You may find yourself coping one way at one time, or you may find yourself going through all of them before you feel adjusted.

### Initial Return

Most people feel some excitement upon returning. It is exciting to see friends, family, McDonalds etc. You have so much to tell and say. You will also have some emotional and spiritual adjusting to do.

Once you are back home, you may find yourself struggling. The following are some options you may experience in Re-entry adjustments.

### Option I: Isolate (Be Alienated)

After awhile, you may begin to feel like a “fish out of water”. You may find yourself withdrawing from others – reading books, writing letters, not socializing with friends and family. You may find yourself feeling a strong guilt over your home culture’s affluence and materialism. You may be unaware of other alternatives that impact your home culture or church.

#### Suggestion:

You need someone who has experienced Re-entry stress to help in understanding the transition process and exploring options. Contact your Team Leader or your church. Talk it out with someone who is willing to listen.

## Options II: Rebel (Be Angry)

### *No one understands!*

This is where you may find yourself angry at your culture, your friends, your family, your church. No one understands you! Everyone is different from before and even his or her lifestyle or values are bad. You may find yourself mocking them. They appear foolish in what they do and what they value. You begin to bash your own culture.

#### **Suggestion:**

You need to seek support from someone who has been through Re-entry stress, but who also can help you understand how to soften your spirit and heart. Again, your church or Team Leader is good options. A former missionary would understand and be very helpful. Remember, as much as you can share, people will never really understand until they go themselves—so be patient and understanding!

## The Final Option: Integrate (Be Pro-Active)

This is the optimal way of coping and ultimately the final option for you to re-enter and be readjusted. You relate back to the home culture in a way that does not compromise or negate your new values or lessons learned from the short-term experience. You continue to learn while creating a unique lifestyle, incorporating the old and the new.

#### **Suggestion:**

Seek like-minded people to foster your integration. Then go and share your secrets with those who are still struggling in the other options. Find a way to get plugged in somewhere at home where you can apply what you learned out on the field. Let your enthusiasm spread by continuing to live out your faith.

## More Practical Suggestions

1. Find other returnees with whom you can share and have fellowship. Discuss the needs of the world and pray for them. Learn to think globally.
2. Give yourself time to readjust, be patient with yourself and with others.
3. Take time to process what you experienced so you can better share with those around you.
4. Recognize and accept which transition stage or option you are going through, and remember that “reverse culture shock” or “re-entry stress” is a normal part of the process of returning home.
5. Have a good sense of humor.