

Mercy Projects Mission Trip Debrief

You do not need to return this form to MP office.

Why a Debrief?

Jesus knew the importance of reviewing events when He gathered the disciples together who had returned from a short-term trip (Mark 10:17-24). He listened to the account, affirmed the experience, and led them in prayer—praising the Father for their experience. He also redirected their eyes from the past occurrence and more importantly placed the focus back on God and their relationship with him.

Use these questions (individually or collectively) to evaluate and maximize your experience in Ukraine, Georgia, or Armenia.

- 1) What were some of your most enjoyable moments?
- 2) What experiences challenged you?
- 3) A healthy team will make use of the diverse gifts of its members. It will also be able to deal with conflict. How did your team function?
- 4) Did you experience any conflict with your teammates or nationals? Was the conflict reconciled? Why or why not?
- 5) What did you learn about team ministry?
- 6) What is the biggest challenge that awaits you upon returning home?
- 7) How do you feel about leaving the MP camp?
- 8) Share tough experiences that show what God has taught you and the team.
- 9) What did you see in the people of Ukraine/Georgia/Armenia (kids, staff, etc.) that you did not expect to see?
- 10) What did you see in the country that was different from your expectations?
- 11) What have you enjoyed most about the team and about each other? Feel free to share your thoughts with those people directly.
- 12) What do you need most from the team as you make the transition back home? Be realistic and clear about needs and about the commitments you make to one another (keeping in touch).
- 13) How can you better prepare yourself to be an Integrator and not an Assimilator or Alienator upon your return (see reading on page 2 of debrief)?

Adequate Closure:

Since we are in close quarters with our teammates, tired, and oftentimes without much “alone time,” we can experience conflicts with our teammates and maybe even the nationals. Maybe you didn’t even realize that you were frustrated with a situation until a couple of days after the conflict. If you do not seek out adequate closure with teammates and/or nationals, you may carry burdens and guilt with you upon your return. Challenge yourself to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you depart from the field. Pray for them before you approach them.

Types of people returning from the mission’s field:

-The **Assimilator** seems to slide right back into the home culture with little to no problem and appear almost to have forgotten their experience at the camp. These individuals may seem to have adjusted back to their home culture well, but may have missed out on the greatest growth opportunity, for they do not seem to integrate the things they saw, learned, and questioned into a new view of life and the world.

-The **Alienator** seems to reject the home culture. Although this period may be short for short-termers, they may become pessimistic and critical of the home culture, realizing they too have been part of it. The alienator seems to have a limited ability to see the range of social structures and their appropriateness in their home culture. They finally may succumb to the home culture out of need to belong somewhere. Again, this reaction does not afford a time of growth during re-entry.

-The **Integrator** is the one who expects the dissension he or she is experiencing although maybe not in each form it appears. They are able to identify the changes they have undergone or are still experiencing and do not demand immediate closure on them. They desire to see their mission trip have a lasting impact on their life and the lives of others. This means that they will grapple with how to integrate the things they saw, learned and questioned into creative alternative choices. They remember that a short-term mission trip is meant to have long term affects.

Preparing for Re-entry:

You may arrive home from a mission trip on an initial high. Friends and family who are excited and proud that you have served the Lord in a foreign country often will make you the center of attention. Soon, however, the initial high changes and new feelings emerge concerning:

- **Self-Concept** – Any life changing experience can cause you to re-evaluate who you are in light of the experience. Questions about the meaning of life and its direction may be part of the process. You may decide you never want to go outside your home country again. You may decide there is a call on your life to minister outside the home country. Questioning life can be good, but the uncertainty of the answers can cause some stress.
- **Values** – You can return home feeling differently about material possessions, family life, and/or national priorities in ecology and politics. This can cause you to be

disillusioned and impatient with Christians at home. You may want to react by telling others that they are wrong to own so many “things”, eat so much food or waste so much. It is not uncommon to feel anger at their lack of knowledge, but pray that the Lord will do a work in their heart instead of trying to change them yourself.

- **Expectations** – You may feel a bit like a stranger in your own country. You may have expected your family and friends to be as excited as you are about your experience (maybe even picturing in your mind how excited they will be) and you may become hurt if they show little or no real interest about something that has made a tremendous impact on your life. This may reinforce the opinion you may have that your home culture is self-absorbed and does not care about the important things you have learned. Realize that many will not be able to understand what you have been through. Guard yourself from becoming resentful toward family, friends, and Christians in your home country. Try to keep yourself from judging others for not having any of your new convictions. Share your heart and let God work in their lives through your experience.
- **Sense of Loss** – You may experience a sense of loss over the newfound friends and places you have been. Your everyday life back home is not the same as being continually used by God overseas. Being out of your comfort zone can facilitate a tendency to become extremely close to fellow team members and when you return home you may feel a sense of void. It is normal and healthy to allow a sense of grief for those you left behind.

In Conclusion:

-“Reverse Culture Shock” is a term used upon your return home from a short term (or long term) mission’s trip. This phrase refers to a time of doubt, anger, and maybe even disgust of your own culture upon reentry. Please remember that this is a normal reaction for many people. As you experience these initial feelings we want to challenge you to re-evaluate your lifestyle and allow others to witness a life that has been transformed and God glorified.

-Sharing Your Story: You may feel disappointed when others are not as excited as you are about your recent trip. Many people will **not** be interested. No one can experience what you did, as intensely as you did. Be prepared to give various responses that match their degree of interest:

- 1) A brief overview of your trip for those who might only want to break the ice by asking how your trip went.
- 2) An overview that is a couple of minutes for those people who are a little more interested in your trip.
- 3) Ten to fifteen minute overview of what you did and how you ministered to the children.

-Life Continued at Home: Don't forget that your family and friends had many experiences as well when you were gone. **They will also have important stories to share with you!**

-Develop some realistic applications of the trip for yourself. Avoid being unreasonable on yourself by telling yourself that you will remember every child at camp and pray for all of them individually for all their needs. Think through some reasonable ways of integrating your experiences into your daily routine at home.

-While you were in Eastern Europe you probably saw quite a bit. You didn't just experience new sights and smells, but were made aware of needs and opportunities to make a difference. We hope that what you observed will stay with you and, most importantly, that you will make an effort to see some of these same needs in your own community. Jesus encouraged His disciples to "open their eyes and see"; MP believes that this applies to us as modern-day believers. "Pray without Ceasing!"