Re-Entry Orientation:
Closure, saying goodbye, and looking ahead

Returning Home
Hello AYA Students!

As you begin to prepare for your trip back home - many of you may begin to experience anxiety or stress about returning home, known as reverse culture shock (RCS) or re-entry shock. AYA wants you all to understand that this is completely normal and that an adjustment will also need to be made after you return to your home country. Please review the following information on RCS.

Here are examples of what some of you may be feeling before you return home:

- Excited to be going home but sad that host family is making plans beyond your stay
- Tendency to withdraw from the host family; it may seem easier to say goodbye if you do not feel as close as to your host family
- Confused that the host family may be pulling away from you

Here are some examples of what some of you may feel after you return home:

- Honeymoon period initially when returning home; it is so great to be back and see everyone
- Tendency to compare everything to the US; others are not interested in these comparisons
- Homesick for the US

Almost all students and host families experience RCS to some degree. For some it is minor, and for others, it is significant part of their return experience. Here is some information that will help answer your questions about the end experience. How does it feel? Why does it happen? How can it be managed?

Facts about RCS:

- RCS is often overlooked or dismissed; only a few expect problems readjusting to home.
- RCS is characterized by stages similar to those of culture shock.
- For many RCS can be much more difficult than initial culture shock.
- RCS is different for everyone; the more intense the overseas experience, the more difficult RCS can be.
- RCS cannot be avoided, but it can be managed.
- RCS affects both the student and the host family before and after the student departs.

Why does RCS occur?

- People and places have changed.
- You have changed and see things with your new eyes.
- There is a gap in information; life did not stand still, waiting for you to return.
- People may not be as interested in hearing about your experiences as you are in sharing them.
- Few expect to have trouble adjusting to home and therefore do not prepare.

How do I manage RCS?

- Recognize the symptoms of RCS
- Prepare yourself by thinking about how you dealt with culture shock
- Communication; talk to your host family and discuss your departure.
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- Keep in touch with family and friends back home (within reason)
- Take some time to consider how you have learned, changed, grown from the experience
- Compare both cultures; consider what aspects of American culture you would like to take home with you.
- Bring closure to your experience; say "goodbye" and "thank you", make a scrapbook with your host family, make plans for continuing your relationship
Moving On

Name: ____________________________  Student ID: __________

Complete the following sentences with your own words. You may write whatever comes to your mind.

1. When I think of leaving I feel:

2. For me America means:

3. The things that I will miss are:

4. The things that I will be happy to leave behind are:

5. When I talk to other exchange students about leaving they:

6. When I talk to my American friends about leaving they:

7. The easiest part of leaving for me will be:

8. The most stressful part will be:

9. When I think of returning to my country I feel:
10. I will return to the following people and activities:

_________________________________________________________

11. I think my family will expect me to:

_________________________________________________________

12. I expect that my friends at home will:

_________________________________________________________

13. I think that the hardest part of coming back for me will be:

_________________________________________________________

14. I think that the easiest thing for me to handle when I come home will be:

_________________________________________________________

15. I am really glad that....

_________________________________________________________

16. I will say thank you to my Host Family, friends and local coordinator by...
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Adapted from: Going home: A Workbook for Reentry and Professional Integration, Developed by Martha Denney, NAFSA, 1986