A Guide to Returning Home
After a Field Mission

Mission life can be a positively stimulating and rewarding experience, embracing new people and cultures, working on interesting projects. Then at some point the deployment comes to an end and you need to reintegrate with your home culture and work routine.

As a result, many Humanitarians experience stress and re-adjustment issues, and to what degree will depend on a multitude of factors. Some of which are mentioned here along with tips to better manage this often unsettling period.

1. Length of your mission.
2. The amount of stressors you faced during your assignment.
3. Previous field experience.
4. Degree of differences between home culture and host culture.
5. How meaningful the assignment has been.
6. Interpersonal relationships during your deployment.
7. How well you manage long distance relationships.

Relationships, in all senses of the word, tend to be more intense during challenging field missions than they would be back at home. You are leaving people who had a significant impact on your life in such a short period of time.

Everyone experiences the transition back to their home differently. It is possible that after the initial feeling of euphoria during the first few days, you could experience feelings of loss, and isolation.

You may feel that no one really understands what you have been through, and what's more, most people aren't that interested. You may feel frustrated that you just can't seem to communicate the magnitude of the experience you have undergone.

Staff Welfare Office
A Guide to Returning Home

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A FEW TIPS TO HELP DURING THIS PERIOD OF RE-ENTRY

1. You will readjust to your home environment just as you adjusted to your field mission. For some people, it takes a few days, others a few weeks.

2. Some people find it difficult to put the experience into words. Journaling your thoughts is a good place to start. This could be done just before going to sleep.

3. Find other ways to share your experience: speak to your colleagues back in the office and those who had similar experiences. The Staff Counsellor will try to reach you, but feel free to initiate and share your experience.

4. You have adapted to another culture and working environment, and now you must readapt.

5. Consider taking few days off following an intensive field mission before returning to work.

6. While you are away - Keep up to date with events and in touch with loved ones at home.

7. Do not always expect that your home will be just the same as it was when you left on mission.

8. Before you go home - Reflect on how you have changed and how this may affect your home-coming. If there is an offer of any kind of farewell, take it. Any sort of farewell can only help you move on and, importantly, it also helps those who are left behind.

9. Try to organize a presentation about your experience when you go back to office (we can help you with ideas).

One colleague expressed after her ERR mission in Maiduguri/Nigeria

“…going to a Mall in my city after returning from a mission appeared to me full of unnecessary luxury goods, after witnessing children and girls not having even minimum clothes to dress…”

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