

Team Debrief Session

This session is designed to be very informal and provide team members with the space to process their experience of the trip and the thoughts and feelings it has generated. It is suggested you start your time together with a lunch / early dinner before the session, which will need approximately two hours to work through all of the activities. Below is a suggested breakdown of timings for the session.

At certain points throughout the session, a script is provided to help ensure the key information gets across to the group. This information is presented in italics.

INTRODUCTION 15 mins

REFLECT

- 15 mins What's in your hands now?
- 20 mins God was with you
- 15 mins Understanding poverty
- 15 mins Reverse culture shock

RESPOND

- 20 mins Telling your story
- 20 mins Moving forward

NOTE: Most of the session mirrors activities in the Journal. If the group have taken the time to work through these before the debrief they will be in a better place to contribute to the session.

INTRODUCTION

Begin your session with the following activity to get everyone talking:

ACTIVITY: Encourage the group to bring along photos of a person, place or experience that really impacted them during their trip.

Ask the group to reflect on and each share the following:

- A highlight from the trip
- Something that they are proud of



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REFLECT

What's in your hands now? (J.99)

Remind the group that during the Team Training Day you spent some time looking at what was in your hands before the trip: your hopes, fears and expectations. You looked at what you were taking with you and what you hoped to bring back.

If you have kept the flipcharts used during the Training Day, then get these out and look at how many of the things match with the experiences you had.

You could also distribute the letters that the group wrote to themselves during the Team Orientation Day at this point, or have them turn back and read the letters in their Journals.

QUESTION: Were the positive expectations met? Were your fears a reality?

Now spend some time as a group exploring what you brought back.

QUESTION: Ask the group what they have in their hands now. What did they bring back? This can be in terms of memories, learning or other change they have noticed. Allow time for everybody to share and discuss together.

God was with you

Remind the group of the following verse shared during the orientation session:

'Be strong and courageous! Don't be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' Joshua 1:9

Ask the group to consider where they recognised this truth during the trip. It may not have all been plain sailing; there will have been some highs and lows whilst overseas.

ACTIVITY: Download and print out copies of the 'mountain range graph template'. Encourage the group members to each take a few minutes to use the template to plot their own journey. Get them to think through every day and every activity they took part in and plot the highs and lows on the sheet as if it were a graph. Then ask them to join the dots together, to create a 'mountain range' which will reflect their personal experience.



This is a helpful way to reflect on God's faithfulness throughout your time overseas.

QUESTION: What did people learn from the highs and lows and has this deepened your relationship with God?

Once everyone has completed their mountain range, spend some time giving thanks to God for his goodness and the journey he has taken you on.

Understanding poverty (J.100-101)

With the group, now return to the discussion about what poverty is. Take time to explore together whether people's thinking and perceptions have changed. Remind the group of the definition that Bryant L Myers gives:

'Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, and that are not for life that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of Shalom in all its meanings'.¹

REFLECTIVE GROUP QUESTIONS:

- Do you agree with this theory of poverty more or less since your trip? Why?
- How has your thinking and understanding around this changed?
- Did you notice any disconnect between how we think of poverty and how the poor actually experience poverty?
- What did you learn from the people you met during the trip who are materially poor?
- Are there any ways your experience might inform the way you view the materially poor locally and globally from now on?

Allow plenty of time to explore these questions and create a space for everyone to share.

¹ *Walking with the Poor* by Bryant L Myers



Reverse Culture Shock (J.102-103)

The next section is really important to explore as the group continues to adjust back to their normal lives. You touched on reverse culture shock during the Team Training Day, but this will help them to continue processing all that they experienced while overseas.

Explain that when visiting a new culture you often make adjustments to your behaviours and adapt to the norms and values there to ensure you respect and respond appropriately to the culture. Therefore sometimes some individuals can find it a challenge coming home and re-adapting to the norms and values of life here.

After visiting a culture that displays different norms and values from yours, you may find coming home a little uncomfortable and frustrating at times. This process is known as reverse culture shock.

Reverse culture shock will look different for everyone – and this is not necessarily a bad thing. It can show that the trip has changed you.

Some common experiences of reverse culture shock include:

- *Friends and family not really understanding the importance of your time away*
- *People asking about your trip and then quickly losing interest*
- *Feeling misunderstood when you are sharing about your experiences*
- *Everyday life seeming trivial and boring*
- *Being overwhelmed by 'consumerism culture'*
- *Feelings of low mood and lack of interest in life*
- *A longing to return to where you have just visited*

This quote from *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008) is a great summary of how people can feel when returning from an overseas trip:

'It's a funny thing about comin' home. Looks the same, smells the same, feels the same. You'll realise what's changed is you.'

It might sound strange, but if anyone is experiencing reverse culture shock, then encourage them that this can be a sign that they successfully immersed themselves in, and engaged well with, the new culture they've experienced. They've allowed themselves to be changed and their 'normal' to be challenged. Part of the challenge now is to work out how this change in perspective informs their actions and values in a positive way.



Encourage your group that if they find themselves experiencing any of the above symptoms it's OK and actually a very normal response. Ask some to read out and share the following tips to help them deal with this.

- Be patient with yourself and those around you. If you feel that people don't understand your experience, don't be cross with them. You're the only one who has changed through this experience.
- Arrange regular meet-ups with those you bonded with on your trip. Reflecting on the trip with those who understand is a really helpful way of processing the experience.
- Keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings of frustration and discomfort. Assess whether you have control to make changes around any of the frustrations you may feel.
- Don't rush to visit big shopping centres and supermarkets. Often the western consumerism culture can feel overwhelming after visiting a materially poor country.
- Don't isolate yourself. It's easy to do this if you are feeling low.
- Give yourself time to ease back into life at home.

Allow space for the group to share any of their struggles in returning to their regular lives.

Give space for the group to give other suggestions on how to adapt and provide support to each other.

LEADER'S NOTE: As the group leader, it is helpful to follow up with your team after the debrief session to check in and ensure that everyone is doing OK.

Be aware that some team members may need extra support and time to talk things through one to one. If you don't feel skilled or confident enough to do this, talk to your corps officer about how they can access the pastoral support they need (with the permission of the individual concerned). But continue to encourage your team members and assure them that it's OK if the processing of a trip takes a while.

RESPOND

Once upon a time (J.104-106)

Since the group has returned everyone is likely to have been asked this question many times: 'So ... how was it?'



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This is such a simple question, but it can be very hard to answer.

QUESTION – How have people managed at answering this so far? What's been easy to share? What's been difficult?

Assure the group that it can be really hard to articulate this and share with those around you. Getting to the point where the group feel able to tell their story may take a while and that's OK.

Read through the following tips to inspire the group:

- ***Make it personal.*** This is a really powerful way of sharing your experiences. No one can argue with your story, because it's yours.
- ***Focus on a few key points.*** This can often make it easier to tell and a much more personable experience for the listener.
- ***Less is more!*** Learning to tell your story well can unlock the opportunity for other people to experience your journey too.

Give the group the opportunity to fill out the sections in their Journals focusing on:

- The Call
- The Catalyst
- The Change

Share your stories

Ask the group if anyone wants to tell their story to the group. This is great practice for when they are sharing their story with their friends, families or corps. They could use anything they wrote down for the 'How to tell your story' exercise in their Journal.

If anyone in the group hasn't yet completed this exercise, then encourage them to do so at some point in the next few days, as it will help them work out how best to share their experience with those around them.

Moving forward (J.107-108)

So, you've come to the final stop on this stage of your journey together. The questions for each of the group now are: how do you each move forward? What do you do with your experience? How do you allow this to continue to change you and shape you?

Here are a few ways to consider taking positive action:



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Changing

There are a number of simple actions people can take to make their lives more positive, ethical and just. Here are just a few examples to share with the group:

- **Switching to Fairtrade** - *Buying Fairtrade products is a great way to ensure the producers who grow your tea/coffee/cocoa/sugar etc are getting a fair price and can work themselves out of poverty.*
- **Recycling more** - *This is just one way you can help to restore your relationship with the rest of creation, by taking responsibility for your 'waste'.*
- **Consuming less** - *This is even better than recycling. The less you consume in the first place, the less there is that needs recycling.*
- **Simplify** - *This can be done by rethinking how much of your stuff is of importance or value to you, and passing on anything that isn't. If necessary, start small (eg with your clothes/books etc), and try not to hold on to anything this is not needed or precious to you.*
- **Buy second hand** - *Opting to buy things you do need from charity shops has the dual benefit of helping to fund vital work in the UK and overseas and give other people's unwanted stuff a new lease of life.*

Giving

During the trip everyone in the group will have come back with a better picture of the poverty (material and otherwise) and injustice that exist in our world. It is important to think about how you can respond to this in a way which has a positive impact on the lives of people living in material (and other forms of) poverty.

One commitment people could make is to start giving regularly to the work of The Salvation Army's International Projects Office (IPO). We support communities to address the poverty they are facing, specifically around their access to water, ability to grow enough nutritious food and opportunities to earn enough to support their families.

If people don't feel able to commit to this, then encourage them to consider what they could give. Maybe they could commit to putting on a fundraising event or challenge instead.

NOTE: It is very natural to want to raise money for the place you have just visited. However, it is important that any monetary donations made are done so in relation to the issues highlighted throughout this guide. The best way to do this is to give to an existing project or area of work supported by the IPO. You should never send money directly to a person or project, but instead channel these through IPO.



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Media for Learning

There is no shortage of further reading and discovery to do if you want to take seriously God's call to love mercy, act justly and walk humbly.

Encourage the group to check out the recommendations of books to read, films to watch, websites/blogs and other resources listed in their Journals on pages 112-113 (Appendix 3).

Campaigning

Team members may feel inspired to campaign for change and challenge unjust structures of society. There are a number of ways to get involved in campaigns, and the nature of these change all the time.

To check the latest ways to get involved, visit www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ipo and www.salvationarmy.org/isjc.

As a final activity, ask the group to commit to making one response as a result of their trip. You could ask the group to write this down on postcards which you can collect and post back to them after a month or two to keep them accountable.

After each committing to one response, place all the cards in the centre of the room and include them in your closing prayer as you end the session.



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