

# How Have I Changed From My Experience Abroad?

## An Awareness Exercise for Returned Exchange Students

(This exercise is adapted and modified from one developed by Neal Grove of the American Field Service)

For the past three decades as part of a major study, hundreds of recently returned exchange students (Rebounds) have been asked to describe some of the internal changes that they have experienced as part of their year abroad. In the list attached, in no particular order, are some of their statements.

Some of these might be changes that you, too, have felt, or are currently feeling. If you haven't thought very carefully about how you have changed, this list may be especially helpful in making you more fully aware of what has happened to you. Or, if you have thought a lot about it, this list might provide some validation to the thoughts and emotions that you are experiencing.

This is a three-part exercise. The first is to aid you in your self-awareness and understanding. The second is to assist you in focusing your thoughts. The third is to help you communicate your feelings, joys and frustrations to yourself, your parents, and your peers. Be aware that you have only 30 minutes to complete the exercise, and that throughout the room are Rotex who are willing and able to assist you in your thought process. Don't be afraid to ask for help, but these should be your thoughts, not theirs.

Please note that the Examination Book being given you as part of this exercise is yours to keep. Consider it as a personal journal from this weekend. With your permission, Rotex will be collecting these booklets at the end of this portion of the exercise, and then, in the next part of this exercise, might read your comments aloud for the group to share. Note that they will keep your name, gender, host country and sponsoring Rotary Club anonymous. These are your personal thoughts that we honor and respect. Perhaps some years from now, you might re-read your thoughts from today and they might trigger even more appreciation for the incredible year you just experienced, and for the remarkable person that you are.

And remember, there are no right or wrong answers to this exercise.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. Read through the list of statements attached and place a check mark by each change that you believe has occurred in you during your exchange year.**
- 2. Then go back and find the three statements that most resonate for you (i.e. touch you emotionally). Choose carefully, and when you have made your selection, circle those three specific statements of how you have changed.**
- 3. Finally, for each of these three most resonate statements, write the statement on top of a page in your Examination Book, and then a few sentences or perhaps more, elaborating about how this statement pertains to you - or perhaps better said, "*the New You*". Be honest, be self-aware, and most importantly, be proud of how you have changed, matured, and grown during your exchange year. Focus on the *New You*, and your life today and in the future.**

- I have increased my perseverance and self-discipline.
- I am more willing to strive and sacrifice in order to do well in my studies at school or in independent learning projects.
- I am more confident and positive when meeting new people.
- I am more confident and assertive when facing new situations.
- I have a greater capacity to accept differences in others.
- I am more able to share my thoughts and feelings with others, and to be open when others wish to share theirs with me.
- I have more curiosity about and respect for new ideas.
- I have a clearer notion of what I will do with my life.
- I am more flexible and able to adjust to changes in others.
- I am more tolerant of ambiguous situations, that is, of situations that are confusing and open to differing interpretations.
- I have more ability to see myself objectively, that is, to see my own day-to-day problems in a broader, more realistic context.
- I am more deeply committed to an idea, cause, or goal.
- I have a greater sense of responsibility for other people.
- I have improved my ability to speak a foreign language.
- I am more able to express deep emotions freely.
- I am more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle.
- I am more able to ask for and receive help from others.
- I have a greater ability to empathize with others, that is, to put myself in their place when making judgments.
- I have greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed.
- I can accept failures and shortcomings in myself more easily.
- I have increased my capacity to experiment and take risks.
- I understand more fully my own strengths and weaknesses.

- I am more able to accept as valid other values and lifestyles.
- I have a deeper understanding of (if not necessarily commitment to) the values and lifestyle of my native community.
- I am more aware of the opportunities in life that are open to me.
- I feel greater respect and appreciation for my natural family.
- I am more independent in my relations with family and friends.
- I feel that I need fewer friends, but have deeper (more intimate and more close two or three trusting) friendships.
- I am more aware of the way I use and structure time.
- I have a greater capacity to profit from my mistakes.
- I am more interested in and capable of making long-range plans.
- I am more determined to fully develop my skills and talents.
- I feel a greater need to have diverse experiences and friends.
- I am more balanced in my judgments; that is, less likely to judge things as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong".
- I am more likely to do things spontaneously, that is, to do things without undue concern about possible consequences.
- I am more capable of solving life's day-to-day problems.
- I think more critically; I am more discriminating and skeptical.
- I have improved observation skills.
- I need more time to be alone.
- I am more confident about the decisions I make.
- I feel more surely that common bonds unite all human beings.
- I have a deeper understanding of the problems and issues that confront all human beings on this planet.
- I have greater awareness of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world.
- I am more comfortable being alone, enjoying my own company.