

Post High School/College-Bound

Your Rebound year will be like no other year in your life. If you are heading off to college, you are in for some especially fun, albeit challenging, times. Here are some tips for making the most of your rebound year in college.

Some students, when they come home from exchange after having finished high school, struggle with how similar or different the circumstances back home are. Some students have hoped that everything stayed the same and that they can jump right back in where they left off; others feel they have changed a lot while abroad and want the people back home to have changed as well. Ultimately, **the circumstances back home are never just how you think they will be, so have an open mind** about your return home and re-acclimation there.

Moving away from home again so soon after returning from your exchange can be hard. You were probably just getting used to being around your old friends again and re-navigating your family relationships, and now you're with new people in a new place all over again. Recognize that this is difficult to do, but know that you can do it! **You will always be a part of your family and your true friends from high school will remain your friends.** Plus, you will make new friends in college if you open yourself up to it. It may be helpful to bear in mind that the only thing that really stays constant is change, so embrace and learn from change.

- Recognize that in college, **you're not going to be known as The Foreign Exchange Student anymore.** While having spent a year abroad is now an important part of your identity, it's also a *past* experience - many of the people you will start meeting won't know this about you. Embrace this as an opportunity to make friends who like you for *you*, not for where you're from.
- Revel in the fact that, unlike when you arrived in your host country, **the people around you are facing many of the same issues you are!** This is a good opportunity to find something in common with your new classmates and share in the experience of being in a new environment with new people in a way you may not have been able to when you went on exchange.
- One thing that can be difficult transitioning into college from your Outbound year is that **while your new classmates are struggling with moving away from home for the first time, you've already done it for a whole year.** Avoid the temptation to think this alienates you from them; instead, make yourself a resource for your new friends! You are a great person to talk to and a great example of how to live away from home.
- A difficult part of starting college after returning from your year abroad is how fast the circumstances change: you were just getting used to your life with your new family, friends, and language, and now suddenly you are with all new people again. It can be hard to navigate these changes, but don't let the task become insurmountable. Keep in contact with your host family and keep speaking the language you learned, but **remember that life is going on all around you.** There

are people to meet, clubs to join, classes to take. The only person keeping you from learning as much now as you did on your exchange is you.

Be proud of the many skills you acquired as an exchange student. Some students can start to feel that they are “behind” if they are starting college a year after finishing high school. While you are at college to learn, bear in mind that **just because you weren't at college last year doesn't mean you weren't learning something just as valuable as anything taught at a university.**

- As far as course loads go, we've seen a lot of variation in what college-bound Rebounds can handle. Some students, having been away from rigorous academics for a year, find that they need an easier transition back into this type of schedule. Other students feel new-found drive to learn and take on a lot of classes. Ultimately, **do what feels right for you** and don't let others judge you for the classes that you do or don't take.
- Most colleges have a lot of resources to help you cope with the changes you will experience, so take advantage of them! Not only do most schools have academic, career, and psychological counseling; most have **organizations for or in support of international students, where you'll fit right in.**
- Choosing a major is an arduous process for most college students, and can be especially so for many former exchange students. **It's likely that your experiences on your year abroad have changed who you want to be and what you want to do.** At the same time, however, it's likely you had an idea of what you wanted to study in college before you went on exchange. So, you have to find a way to integrate who you became on your year abroad with who you have always been into a college major, and, in the end, a career path.
- It might seem daunting at first, but **most former exchange students find ways to incorporate what they learned on exchange into what they study in college,** and there are many ways to do this. Keep an open mind about choosing your major: it may take time, but there *is* a way to continue the journey you embarked upon when you became an exchange student.

And remember, always feel free to contact any Rotex!

Or go to “Rotex – North Star Rotary Youth Exchange” on Facebook