



# Global Village Team Leader Reflection Guide



## Contents

<b>'Who would you be if you grew up here?'</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Why reflection is important</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Benefits of reflection meetings .....	5
Your role .....	5
<b>What? So what? Now what?</b> .....	<b>6</b>
What? (Reporting what happened, objectively) .....	6
So what? (What did you learn? What difference did the event make?) .....	6
Now what? (How will they think or act in the future as a result of this experience?) .....	7
<b>Designing a reflection meeting</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Facilitating a reflection meeting – tips for success .....	8
Icebreakers .....	9
<b>ORID framework</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Journaling</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>The 7 Mindsets</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Mindsets reflection discussion .....	16
<b>Welcome home housing simulation</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Topical theme cards discussion</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>'Briars in the Cotton Patch' reflection</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Culture crossing</b> .....	<b>26</b>
In-country learning activity: Universal, cultural or personal .....	26
In-country learning activity: Cultural conditioning .....	27
Exercise: In the mind of the beholder .....	28
Exercise: In the mind of the beholder, part 2 .....	29
Journal entry .....	30
<b>Preparing to return home</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Common feelings of re-entry .....	31
Addressing re-entry in the field .....	32
<b>Advice from the community</b> .....	<b>34</b>
Best practices from the team leader community .....	34

## ‘Who would you be if you grew up here?’

It was a simple question asked by our team leader on the third day of the trip. After three days of mixing concrete in 90-degree heat, bending rebar, and stacking cement, I found myself focusing on the work — which in itself wasn’t bad. I wanted to build this home for the family. Seeing little Alejandro and Maria Jose on the site every day motivated me more. They deserved this home, and I was dedicated to doing my part to make it happen.

As we sat on the rooftop balcony of our small hotel in Estelli, Nicaragua, during our reflection meeting, the sun setting against the mountains, I heard the question again, repeated by a team member to my left in the circle we formed.

“Who would I be if I grew up here?”

The question was asking much more than what my occupation would be. Who would I be as a person? I asked myself, “What values would I have and demonstrate? What things would I hold as important? Would I have had the intrinsic motivation to be successful, despite the odds? What advantages have I had in life that I would not have gotten here? Do I take those things for granted?”

The next day on the build site, as Alejandro came home from school, I saw him truly for the first time. A 9-year-old boy who, despite or because of his situation, had the biggest smile and the most endearing “*hola*” you would ever hear. He was studious, an incredible artist, and very protective of his little sister. And this home was for him.

I have no idea if I would be as great as Alejandro if I grew up here. I could only hope I would. But that one question asked during the reflection meeting changed the trip from a service experience to a transformative experience. I recognized those things I take for granted — and all of the Alexandros who are in my own backyard.

Learning comes not from doing, but from thinking about what we do. I did not learn who I would be if I grew up here, but after being asked to think about that question, I have a better idea of who I should become.

— *Nashid Sharrief, senior specialist,  
volunteer program development and training,  
Habitat for Humanity International*

## Why reflection is important

Often we go through our day-to-day life without spending too much time “processing” our experiences. This is not a bad thing, since much of what we do throughout the day is routine and it may not hold a lot of meaningful learning.

When we participate in experiences that are new, outside of our comfort zone or outside of our routine, a lot of learning can take place. Research shows that reflection has some positive impact on volunteers’ attitudes about service, but the lack of reflection has a strong negative impact on their attitudes about service and the service activity. This is why reflection meetings are a mandatory part of a Habitat for Humanity volunteer experience.

## Benefits of reflection meetings

- Gives meaning to the experience: How did we do? How is the community served by this? How is this part of a larger effort?
- Provides an opportunity to establish individual and team expectations.
- Helps volunteers understand the limitations and opportunities of the service site or community organization.
- Relieves tension and provides re-energizing and renewal (this is especially important when the service is emotionally challenging).
- Creates a sense of accomplishment that is crucial, especially where there are limited external rewards.
- Develops a “spirit” of service and civic-mindedness into a way of life.
- Improves ethics of service: As volunteers examine the effects of their behavior, they discover ways to improve the quality and quantity of their service.
- Can create a sense of closure, which is especially important after a long service period or project or an emotional experience.
- Fosters personal and team development:
  - Cultivates lifelong learning skills in both positive and negative experiences.
  - Produces a “reality check” that guards against reinforcing inaccurate perceptions or biases.
  - Encourages a broader perspective of the experiences of others.
  - Builds community among the volunteers.
  - Increases problem-solving skills, empowerment and confidence.
  - Creates shared understandings, open communication and better teamwork.
  - Clarifies values as volunteers confront new situations.
  - Provides practice clarifying goals and making choices to accomplish these goals.
  - Encourages volunteers to do higher-level thinking as they look for root causes of complex issues.
  - Acknowledges the skills gained and builds confidence.

## Your role

You have the opportunity to facilitate the reflection process with your group members. You can do this by scheduling time throughout your trip for the group to come together and talk about their experiences by asking questions or prompting the group to think through a reading, a quote or an activity.

It is up to the volunteers to draw their own meaning from their experience. Applying their experiences may occur during the trip but most likely will occur once volunteers return home and have had more time to think about it. Because you and your group shared this experience, it is important to have the support of the group once you are home as well. You can encourage this reflection and learning to occur through your facilitation, but don’t take it personally if volunteers don’t open up during reflection times. It is a personal journey.

Reflection time also should occur after the trip. Volunteers often will be able to draw more conclusions about their experience when they return because they have had more time to think about it. Because you and your group shared this experience, it is important to have the support of the group once you are home as well.

## What? So what? Now what?

This is a well-used and successful model for designing reflection activities. Although you can derive learning from each question, focusing on all three will provide broader insights and keep volunteers from getting stuck on only the facts or just the feelings.

### What? (Reporting what happened, objectively)

Without judgment or interpretation, volunteers describe in detail the facts and events of the service experience. Questions include:

- What happened? What did you observe?
- What issue is being addressed or what population is being served?
- What were the results of the project?
- What events or “critical incidents” occurred?
- What was of particular notice? How did you feel about that?
- Would someone with a different reaction like to share?

### So what? (What did you learn? What difference did the event make?)

Volunteers discuss their feelings, ideas and analysis of the service experience. Questions can also focus on the meaning or importance of the activity to:

#### THE VOLUNTEER

- Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest?
- Did you hear, smell or feel anything that surprised you?
- What feelings or thoughts seem strongest today?
- How is your experience different from what you expected? What struck you about that? How was that significant?
- What affects the way you view the situation or experience? (What lens are you viewing from?)
- What do the critical incidents mean to you? How did you respond to them?
- What did you like or dislike about the experience?

#### THE ‘RECIPIENT’

- Did the “service” empower the recipient to become more self-sufficient?
- What did you learn about the people or community that we served?
- What might affect the recipient’s views or experience of the project?

#### THE COMMUNITY

- What are some of the pressing needs and issues in the community? How does this project address those needs?
- How, specifically, has the community benefited?
- With unlimited creativity, what is the most impact on the community that you can imagine?

#### THE GROUP (FOR GROUP PROJECTS)

- In what ways did the group work well together? What does that suggest to you about the group?
- How might the group have accomplished its task more effectively?

### Now what? (How will they think or act in the future as a result of this experience?)

Volunteers consider the broader implications of the service experience and apply what they have learned. Be aware of striking a balance between realistic, reachable goals and openness to spontaneity and change. Possible questions include:

- What seems to be the root causes of the issue or problem addressed?
- What kinds of activities are currently taking place in the community related to this project? What contributes to the success of projects like this? What hinders success?
- What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply this learning back home? What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue?
- What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties?
- What information can you share with your peers or community volunteers?
- If you were in charge of the project, what would you do to improve it?
- If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?
- What would “complete” the service?

## Designing a reflection meeting

An effective reflection activity should:

- Have an outcome in mind (e.g., leadership, team building, improved critical thinking, acknowledgment)
- Be appropriate for the team (age, culture, etc.)
- Happen before, during and as soon after the service experience as possible.
- Be directly linked to the project or experience.
- Dispel stereotypes, address negative experiences, increase appreciation for community needs, increase commitment to service.
- Be varied for different learning styles, interests, etc.
- Actively involve the service recipients for a really compelling reflection session.
- Be facilitated well for maximum participation, creativity and learning.

## Facilitating a reflection meeting – tips for success

The role of the team leader is to facilitate the flow of comments from volunteers. Although it is not necessary to interject comments after each volunteer speaks, having the team leader periodically assist the group with their contributions can be helpful. Specific advice for service reflection activities includes:

- **Paraphrase:** Paraphrase what a volunteer has said so that he or she feels understood and so that the other volunteers can hear a concise summary of what has been said. Say something like, “So, what you’re saying is that we need to be careful what we say to other people in the group.”
- **Check for meaning:** Check your understanding of a volunteer’s statement or ask the volunteer to clarify what he or she is saying. Say something like, “Are you saying that this plan is not realistic? I’m not sure that I understand exactly what you mean.”
- **Give positive feedback:** Compliment an interesting or insightful comment. Say, “That’s a good point. I’m glad that you brought that to our attention.”
- **Expand:** Elaborate on a volunteer’s contribution to the discussion with examples, or suggest a new way to view the problem. Try, “Your comments provide an interesting point from the community’s perspective. It could also be useful to consider how the government would view the same situation.”
- **Argue opposites:** Disagree (gently) with a volunteer’s comments to stimulate further discussion. For example, “I can see where you are coming from, but I’m not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience that is different from Jim’s?”
- **Relieve tension:** Mediate differences of opinion between volunteers and relieve any tensions that may be brewing. For instance, “I think that Susan and Mary are not really disagreeing with each other but are bringing out two different sides of this issue.”
- **Change the process:** Alter the method for obtaining participation or by having the group evaluate ideas that have been presented. Say something like, “Let’s break into smaller groups to discuss each theory.”
- **Summarize:** Summarize (and record, if desired) the major views of the group, for example. “I have noted four main points that have been brought up ...”
- **Seek a balance:** Be flexible to address members’ needs while keeping the process consistent with the theme. In other words, if some notable incident happens during the day or has been forming for some time, it will probably be on the members’ minds enough to prevent their presence in any other conversation. Thus, even if you have an outcome in mind, what needs to be said may be the most important thing to discuss or reflect upon.
- **Use silence:** People need some silence to reflect internally, some more than others do. Ask the question, then wait.
- **Invite participation:** Ensure that all volunteers have an equal opportunity to be involved in the dialogue. If there are some dominant voices in the group, do not be afraid to draw others into the conversation.
- **Keep the conversation on target:** Discussion cannot be allowed to veer with no focus. Reflection questions often lead to other questions, which lead to other questions. These diversions can lead to great discussion, but they can just as easily go all over the place with little value for volunteers. Maintain focus by bringing the discussion back to the theme or significant topic and presenting “so what, now what” questions before leaving a decent topic.

## Icebreakers

- **Sharing trepidations:** In pairs or small groups, have volunteers share their trepidations about starting a volunteer experience. Follow this by either having volunteers introduce one another or by asking the groups to share what they consider to be their most significant concerns or fears regarding the start of their volunteer experience. As the group shares, the group leader can validate and address their concerns as appropriate.
- **The circles of volunteer's name here:** Have volunteers draw a large circle on a sheet of paper, with other smaller circles radiating from it. Volunteers write their name in the central circle and the names of groups with which they identify (e.g., gender, age group, ethnic, social, political, ideological, athletic, etc.) in the satellite circles. Then ask volunteers to move around the room to find three teammates who are the most or least similar to themselves. This activity helps volunteers appreciate the diversity in the group.
- **Dinner plans:** Have each person complete the following sentence: "If I could have dinner with any person, living or dead, it would be \_\_\_\_\_, because ..."
- **I'm unique:** Ask each person to share one thing that makes him or her unique.
- **Marooned:** Break the volunteers into groups of four to seven and tell them, "You are marooned on an island. What five items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded?" (You can use a different number, such as seven, depending on the size of each team.) Note that they are allowed five items *per team*, not per person. You can have them write items on a flip chart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps them learn about another person's values and problem-solving styles and promotes teamwork.
- **Familiar and unique:** Break off into small groups (ideally by counting off). Each small group must come up with five things that the group members have in common. Then they will be asked to share something really unique about themselves individually. The group shares their familiar and unique features with the rest of the group.
- **Who can develop:** Have volunteers identify someone who has contributed to their growth and development as a volunteer. As they introduce themselves, have them explain their relationship to the person who contributed to their development.
- **Good or new:** Ask each person to share something good or new they have experience in the past 24 hours.
- **My slogan:** Explain that many companies have slogans or mottos that reflect their values. For example, Ford Motor Co. uses the slogan, "Quality is job one." Ask each volunteer to write (or borrow) a slogan to describe himself or herself and share it with the group.
- **The best team:** Have each person share a description of the best team they have ever been on and why it was the best. Post characteristics on a chart or poster. Debrief this exercise by having the team identify ways to maximize the "best team" characteristics. This icebreaker would be particularly appropriate in a group where teamwork is expected.
- **Two truths and a lie:** Give each individual a piece of scrap paper and instruct them to write three statements about themselves: One should be false, and the other two should be true. Explain that the goal is to fool people about which one is the lie. Allow five minutes to write statements, then have each person read the three statements and have the group guess the lie. Award a prize to the individual who makes the most correct guesses.
- **Guess who:** At the onset of your meeting, have each participant complete and return a 3-by-5 card with two or three statements about himself or herself. During the session, read clues and have the rest of the group guess which person is being described.
- **Something new:** On the second day of volunteering, ask each person to share one thing they learned about someone in the group during the previous session or day. Have the rest of the group try to guess who is being described.
- **Common ground:** In small groups, have volunteers come up with six things they have in common and have them share these with the large group.
- **Favorite T-shirt:** Ask attendees to bring (not wear) their favorite T-shirt to the meeting. Once all volunteers have arrived, ask each person to show the shirt to the group and explain how it resembles their personality.

- **My name:** Have team members introduce themselves and talk about what they know about why they have their name (e.g., “My mother wanted to name me after her great aunt Helen, who once climbed Pike ’s Peak in high heels”). They can talk about their first name, middle name or a nickname.
- **Eye contact:** Standing in a circle, ask everyone to look down. On a certain cue, have everyone look up at a specific person, but not directly to their right or left. If you make eye contact with someone, you must take a step back from the circle. If you do not make eye contact with the person, you are still in the game. When you get down to the last three or four people, the remaining players are no longer limited by the previous rule about the person standing next to them.
- **Creative high-fives:** Ask team members to partner up and come up with as many creative ways to give their partner a high-five as they can in 60 seconds (or however long you choose) — under the leg, behind the back, etc. Volunteers can then demonstrate them.
- **Silent identification:** Each volunteer is asked to either write words or draw pictures that describe themselves. This is done silently. Then everyone pins the pictures or words to their chests, walks around and looks over all the other volunteers. Pictures and words are then shuffled, and volunteers are asked to identify the person to whom the picture belongs.
- **Name game:** Sit in a circle. One person starts by using an adjective starting with the same letter as their first name, followed by their first name (e.g., Clever Claire, Kind Karen). The next person in the circle has to repeat the first person’s adjective and name and then add their own. The last person has to repeat all other names in order and end with their own.
- **Balloon game:** Have everyone put one piece of information about themselves in a balloon, then blow up the balloon and throw it in the middle of the circle of volunteers. One by one, pop the balloons and guess to whom each piece of information belongs.
- **Nonverbal birthday lineup:** Ask everyone to line up according to the month and day of their birth without any talking. This should inspire some interesting means of communication toward a common goal.
- **Stupid human tricks:** Ask each person to introduce themselves and demonstrate a stupid human trick.
- **The four C’s:** Ask volunteers to name a cartoon character, a color, a car and a cuisine that best describes their personality, then explain why.

## ORID framework

When our Global Village volunteers return home from helping a family in need, they always have the same report: “I got back more than I gave.” Habitat for Humanity depends on our team leaders to help volunteers connect dots — from the Global Village trip to life back at home, and from the host community to a world where everyone has a decent place to live.

Reflection meetings are the best tools to ensure you have a meaningful Global Village trip. Discussions built on the ORID framework — objective, reflective, interpretive, decisional — strengthen bonds among your team members, deepen the team’s understanding of the local community and the conditions of their shelter, and catalyze volunteers to continue serving at home.

Below is a discussion framework that works well for Global Village teams, but feel free to customize it. You can get ideas from the sample questions below and discuss them at a pace that suits your team.

### MEETING 1: SHARE EXPECTATIONS

At the trip’s beginning, gather everyone for a meeting before the build and ask, “What is one expectation you have for this trip?” Invite each person to share. The question prompts your volunteers to consider what they want to take from the experience, and it’s a great team builder. You’ll be surprised by the range of answers.

### MEETING 2: OBSERVE

After your first day in the community, share first impressions. Invite the group to observe and not rush to figure out what it all means. You’ve got plenty of time to get there together. Offer simple questions such as, “How were we greeted?” and “What community resources did you see?” As with the first night, invite everyone to speak at least once.

Sample questions:

- What did you see in the community?
- How did the community greet us?
- What were their houses like?
- What are their community resources?
- What are the key points you noted during the Habitat orientation?
- On the work site, when did you most feel you were part of the team?
- How did community members, construction workers or the homeowner act on the work site?

### MEETING 3: REFLECT

Now that your group is connecting, guide them into sharing their personal reflections. Focus on the community members (“In what ways do you feel similar to the people we’re meeting? In what ways do you feel very different?”), the build (“In what ways did we work well together as a team?”), or individual experience (“In what ways does this community remind you of yours at home?”). These more personal questions may stretch across several meetings; let your group dynamics determine the flow.

Sample questions:

- How do you feel in the community?
- In what ways do you feel similar to the homeowner?
- In what ways do you feel very different from the homeowner?
- How might you feel about yourself if you lived here?
- In what ways does this community remind you of yours at home?
- What part of the day made you feel most inspired? What frustrated you most?
- What was one thing that you did that made you feel more effective?

- In what ways did we work well together as a team?
- How can we work better as a team tomorrow?
- What did you think about while on the work site today?

#### MEETING 4: INTERPRET

Lead the group to higher-level questions that draw connections between the community's situation, Habitat's interventions, and the conditions that sustain poverty. Questions such as, "What choices does the homeowner have? What choices do they not have?" should get your team thinking. Invite them to imagine, "What would make this community a better place to live?" Consider the differences between this trip and your home life with a question such as, "After this week, how do you define 'community'?" Let people wrestle with these difficult questions. We want volunteers to consider that poverty may look different everywhere, but you can always help improve people's lives.

Sample questions:

- What support does the homeowner have?
- What does the homeowner seem to value?
- What choices does the homeowner have? What choices do they not have?
- What difference do you think our work with Habitat is making for this family?
- What would make this community a better place to live?
- What do a person's living conditions say about them? What do your living conditions say about you?
- What questions does this trip raise for you?
- Do you wish your community at home resembled this community in any way? How?
- What has helped our team forge community?
- After this week, how do you define "community"?
- How has this experience been meaningful to you?

#### MEETING 5: DECIDE

As the trip comes to a close, help your volunteers consider how they'll channel their energy back at home. Ask, "In addition to this trip, how have you served people experiencing poverty?" Pinpoint the differences between the trip and home by asking, "Where you live, who has trouble affording housing?" Depending on the group's interest, you might ask a broad question, such as, "Will you do anything differently when you're home?" or a narrower one: "What will we commit to do as a group to continue improving this community?"

Sample questions:

- In addition to this trip, how have you served people experiencing poverty?
- What can you do at home to honor the people we served here?
- Will you do anything differently when you're home?
- Where you live, who has trouble affording housing?
- What would improve housing conditions in your community?
- How can you serve people at home in a way that makes a lasting difference in their lives?
- What's your next step? Whom will you contact to get started?
- What are we committed to doing as a group?

We intentionally end with decisions. At some point, each of your volunteers made the big decision to join this Global Village team. We hope that they make another decision after the trip: to continue volunteering and serving. After all, poverty isn't just a problem in the community where you're building; it is also a problem at home. Your team will continue these conversations as you begin sharing photos.

## Journaling

A common tendency is for journal entries to become a mere log of events rather than a reflective activity in which volunteers consider the service experience in the context of learning. Guidance is needed to help volunteers link personal learning with Habitat's mission.

### PERSONAL JOURNAL

Volunteers will write freely about their experience. This is usually done daily. These personal journals may be shared with the group during reflection meetings or kept as a reference to use at the end of the experience.

### KEY PHRASE JOURNAL

In this type of journal, volunteers are asked to integrate terms and key phrases within their journal entries. The team leader can provide a list of terms at the beginning of the trip. Volunteers also could create their own list of key phrases.

### CRITICAL INCIDENT JOURNAL

This type of journal entry focuses the volunteer on analysis of a particular event that occurred during the trip. By answering one of the following sets of prompts, volunteers are asked to consider their thoughts and reactions and articulate the action they plan to take in the future: Describe a significant event that occurred as a part of the service-learning experience. Why was this significant to you? What underlying issues (societal, interpersonal) surfaced as a result of this experience? How will this incident influence your future behavior?

Another set of questions for a critical incident journal includes the following prompts: Describe an incident or situation that created a dilemma for you in terms of what to say or do. What is the first thing you thought of to say or do? List three other actions you might have taken. Which of the above seems best to you now? Why do you think this is the best response?

### FREE ASSOCIATION BRAINSTORMING

(This reflection session should take place no earlier than the end of the first third of the project experience.) Give each volunteer 10 to 20 "Post-its" and ask them to write down all the feelings they had when they first heard about the Global Village trip. After they finish the first question, have them write down all of the feelings they had when they experienced their first "field encounter." After they finish Question 2, have them write down all of the feelings they are having "right now" regarding their Global Village experience. Encourage them to write down as many different thoughts as possible (one for each card). Have three newsprint papers strategically located on nearby walls or tables. Have one with a large happy face, one with a sad face, and one with a bewildered face. Ask volunteers to now place their words on the newsprint paper that best fits their brainstormed feelings. Then have them stand next to the newsprint that has the largest number of their feelings. This exercise involves both writing and speaking and is seen as nonthreatening in an oral presentation sense.

### QUOTES

Quotes can be useful tools for initiating reflection because there is an ample supply of them, and they are often brief and inspiring. Here are some example quotes you might want to use:

- "If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without insight."  
— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- "I believe that serving and being served are reciprocal and that one cannot really be one without the other."  
—Robert Greenleaf, educator and writer.

- "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."  
— Margaret Mead
- "Unless you choose to do great things with it, it makes no difference how much you are rewarded, or how much power you have."  
— Oprah Winfrey

Quotes may be used in a variety of ways. You might give each volunteer a page of quotes and ask them to pick one that fits their feelings about the Global Village trip. Then you could ask them to explain why this quote represents their feelings.

### QUOTES IN SONGS

Ask the volunteers to find a song with lyrics that describe what they feel about the Global Village experience. Emphasize that it does not need to be a whole song — just a lyric in a song. If they have access to the song, tell them to bring it to play at the end of the reflection session. Even if they do not have the song, ask them to "say" the lyric that describes their feelings. This usually proves to be fun by creating a casual atmosphere and bonding the group together. Many times, other volunteers will try to sing with them. Playing the songs usually creates a celebratory atmosphere. You might also bring a bag of Hershey's Kisses or something similar to keep the festive spirit going.

### REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

Reflective essays are a more formal example of journal entries. Essay questions are provided at the beginning of the trip, and volunteers are expected to submit two to three essays during the trip. Reflective essays can focus on personal development, service experience, or ideas and recommendations for future action.

### DIRECTED READINGS

Directed readings are a way to prompt volunteers to consider their service experience within a broader context of social responsibility and civic literacy. Directed readings can become the basis for group discussion or directed writing.

## The 7 Mindsets

The 7 Mindsets were based on years of research on happiness and success. This reflection activity is a great tool to help any audience identify mindfulness both in the country and at home, and is particularly useful for corporate groups or organization teams. Volunteers are asked to fully reflect on mindfulness of themselves and their observations in the country. For more 7 Mindset resources, visit [7Mindsets.com](http://7Mindsets.com).

### EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Understanding that everything and every situation that currently exist at one point did not. The keys to the Everything is Possible Mindset are:

- **Dream big:** Stretch yourself when setting goals.
- **Embrace creativity as part of the process:** Understand that it will not be a straight line to success. Identify opportunities to be creative.
- **Expect great results:** Focus on how it will work, not how it won't.
- **Quote:** "Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside of them was superior to circumstance." — Bruce Barton, American author and politician

### PASSION FIRST

In order to truly be happy and successful, you have to find ways to cultivate and develop your passions. The keys to this mindset are:

- **Find your passions:** Ask yourself: If money wasn't an issue or an object, what could you spend your time doing for free?
- **Focus on strengths, not weaknesses:** Find those things you are good at and put your energy toward those.
- **Combine your strengths and interests:** Find creative ways to combine the things you are good at with the things you love doing.
- **Quote:** "There are many things in life that will catch your eye, but very few that will capture your heart. Follow those." — Author unknown

### WE ARE CONNECTED

We must be able to see the value in every relationship we have. The keys to this mindset are:

- **Work with others:** Find those people who make you feel and accomplish your best — your dream team.
- **Work for others:** Find ways to give value to people without asking or expecting anything in return when developing relationships. Lead with value.
- **Work through others:** Identify the other connections you need to make to accomplish your goals.
- **Quote:** "We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something." — U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

### 100 PERCENT ACCOUNTABLE

Take ownership of every action and every situation. We are 100 percent accountable for our future happiness and success. The keys to this mindset are:

- **Identify and overcome limiting beliefs:** We all have limiting beliefs — something we believe that stops us from achieving our best (I'm not fast enough, I don't have enough time). Identify your limiting beliefs and find ways to reverse the thinking.
- **Failure is feedback:** Accept any failure as it happened, take personal ownership of it, forgive yourself for it, identify lessons from it, and make adjustments in action.

- **Take ownership of our reactions:** The past is the past, and the future is not predetermined by us; what determines it are our actions in the present. Start again.
- **Quote:** “We are responsible for what we are and whatever we wish ourselves to be. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions.” — Swami Vivekananda, Indian Hindu monk

## ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Energy grows where attention goes. Focus on the things you are grateful for, not what you lack. The keys to this mindset are:

- **Express gratitude:** For the big things, for the small things, for the difficult things.
- **Quote:** “Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be grateful.” — Helen Keller, American author and political activist

## LIVE TO GIVE

In order to receive anything in life, you have to be willing to give it first. The keys to this mindset are:

- **Give genuinely:** Giving is not investing; we give for the sake of giving without expecting anything in return.
- **Receive graciously:** Be able to accept without reservation.
- **Live authentically:** Understand that the greatest gift you can give is to be your authentic self.
- **Quote:** “You give but little when you give your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” — Khalil Gibran, Lebanese-American poet

## THE TIME IS NOW

Take purposeful action in the present.

- **Quote:** “Do not wait; the time will never be just right. Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along.” — Napoleon Hill, American self-help author

## Mindsets reflection discussion

### EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

- What is your vision for yourself? Why is this vision important?
- What is your vision for the organization?
- What is the community or homeowners' vision for themselves?
- What do you want your role to be in achieving this vision?
- Why is it important that you play this role?
- What are you willing to do to make these visions a reality?
- Why are you the person to help make these visions a reality?
- Why are you/we going to succeed?

### PASSION FIRST

- What do you consider your strengths, passions and interests? Consider all categories, including mental, interpersonal, intrapersonal, physical, emotional.
- What strengths, passions or interests have you identified in the community?
- What opportunities do community members have to develop or express those passions?
- How have you noticed their passions showing up in your interactions or their work?

- Do you get excited by your work? What things specifically excite you? What things give you energy? What things drain you of energy?
- Write down how you could leverage your strengths and passions better with the organization. What types of things would you be doing? What types of people would you be working with?

### WE ARE CONNECTED

- List the empowering relationships you currently have that assist you in achieving your goals. These could include colleagues, volunteers, family members, etc.
- How can you better assist these people in achieving their goals and objectives?
- What relationships would you like to see improved?
- How might you make these relationships more empowering? What can you do to assist them in achieving their goals and objectives?
- What relationships and partnerships are necessary for the community to be successful?
- How might the community view “competition” and “teamwork”?
- Where do our views of these things come from?

### 100 PERCENT ACCOUNTABLE

- What things are working for you at with your organization or with the trip?
- What can you do to expand and get more from these positives?
- What things are not working for you?
- Try to identify something that happened to you on this trip (or this year) that you perceive as negative — perhaps a result that you didn’t intend.
- What things can you do differently to change the outcomes? Can you change your perception of the circumstance?
- What adjustments can you make in your approach? What actions can you take to turn the perceived negatives into positives?
- What limiting beliefs do you think exist that will stop you from achieving your goals?
- What potential limiting beliefs have you noticed in the community that may hinder their ability to achieve their vision?

### ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

- Create as long a list as possible of everything you are thankful for leading up to the trip and so far on the trip.
- Write down what your life would be like without these things.
- What things do you think the community members are grateful for, and what would their lives be like without these things?
- Identify at least one thing that happened to you on this trip or over the past year that you perceived as negative. (These can be the same as your responses in the 100 Percent Accountable section.)
- What positives were you able to take from these situations? What positives could you have taken away? Did you learn something that helped you in the future? Did it help you to develop better relationships? What other benefits did you derive?
- How might these lessons facilitate greater success and fulfillment for you in the future?

### LIVE TO GIVE

- What are the things your team does that help Habitat partner with and support the community? Take time to connect how the activities you perform on a daily basis throughout your trip are having a positive impact on the communities we serve.
- What things can you do to maximize your potential with Habitat or with your organization?
- How would this increase your positive impact on the community and the world?
- What additional things can you do to help ensure everyone has a decent place to live?

**THE TIME IS NOW**

- What can you do to continually drive action and creativity in your life?
- What action steps must you take immediately to get closer to your goals?
- What purposeful action do you think the community must be willing to take in order to achieve its vision?  
Which steps are immediate? Which ones need to be sustained?
- What action can you take once you return home to continue to support the cause of affordable housing?

## Welcome home housing simulation

The purpose of this simulation is to get volunteers to think about issues people with low incomes experience when seeking housing. The volunteers learn by doing. As with all role-playing exercises, it is important that volunteers stick to the rules of the simulation and remember that they are getting a very small picture of an experience.

Each volunteer in the simulation plays a different person experiencing homelessness. Each has a different economic situation: Some are recently homeless, some have been homeless for years, some have family responsibilities, and some have drug or alcohol problems. Each volunteer's goal is to find housing and to interact with other volunteers. Volunteers seek housing from various simulation administrators who represent different agencies, from rescue missions to expensive real estate agencies. The simulation is set up in a way that makes it very difficult for most volunteers to find housing, as it would be in real-life situations.

The simulation lasts a preset number of "days." Each day lasts 10-12 minutes (the leader sets the length of the simulation by choosing the number of days it will last). It is recommended that the simulation last at least four days and no more than seven.

After the simulation, volunteers examine their experiences in a guided discussion with a simulation administrator. This is an opportunity for volunteers to see how their experiences were similar to those of other volunteers and in what ways they were unique.

**Find the complete activity [here](#).**

## Topical theme cards discussion

### STEP 1: PREPARE

Think about whom you will bring to the discussion.

### STEP 2: CONSIDER LOGISTICAL QUESTIONS

Where? When? At what time? Will we provide food? How will we set up the room or space?

### STEP 3: CONSIDER A THEME OR LARGER ISSUE

What do you want the group to discuss, e.g., poverty, equality, etc.

### STEP 4: CONSIDER HOW YOU WILL SET THE TONE

How will you have people get to know one another? What can you do to make people more comfortable? What agreements or ground rules can you set with the group?

### STEP 5: OPENING

After introductions, consider how you want people to start thinking about the overall theme or issue you want them to discuss. This can be done through a beginning question the group has to consider individually, in a pair or in the larger group.

### STEP 6: THE QUESTION PROCESS

Every reflection takes shape based on the people who come to the discussion and what experiences and understanding they have on the topic. Knowing this, it is still important to develop questions you can walk the group through, using the following categories as a guide:

- **Clarification (what?)** — What is going on here? What is the shared experience that you all have or just had?
- **Interpretation (so what?)** — What do you think of what is going on here? What does this bring up for you in relation to the work and discussion topic?
- **Implication (now what?)** — What does this discussion make you think of doing or considering further as you move forward?

### STEP 7: CLOSING

It is important to wrap up the reflection with an activity that brings closure to the discussion, either individually or within the larger group. Develop a question that relates to the shared work or experience of which you all are a part.

### THEME 1: DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

- Why is difference sometimes threatening?
- How do we connect with those who are different from us?
- What assumptions do we make about others?
- Is diversity important? Why?
- Is difference a problem, an opportunity, a challenge or a gift?
- How do we learn to have dialogue across difference? What does it look like?
- How do we recognize sameness but acknowledge differences?

**THEME 2: EXCLUSION AND BELONGING**

- How do we respond to strangers?
- What do people gain from joining a group? What do they lose?
- What does it mean to be a stranger or an outsider? What does it feel like?
- Who gets left out and why?
- What does it mean to be alone?
- What does a sense of belonging make possible?

**THEME 3: IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY**

- How do we define who we are?
- How has my family or background shaped who I am?
- What do people gain or lose from joining a group or a community?
- What makes a community strong? What makes it weak?
- To what extent does your identity determine the communities you join?
- Is your sense of individual identity ever in conflict with your community? How?
- How do you understand your own identity?
- How does it relate to the communities you are a part of?

**THEME 4: JUSTICE AND EQUALITY**

- What is justice? How do we recognize it?
- Can there be justice without equality?
- Is justice for all possible? Or will injustice always exist?
- What are the causes of injustice and inequality?
- What is the world we dream of living in? Is it possible?
- What would you be willing to give up for equality? What would you not be willing to give up?
- Who suffers most from injustice and inequality? Has it changed?

**THEME 5: POWER AND PRIVILEGE**

- What is power? How does it work?
- How do we know or identify privilege?
- What is the appropriate response to privilege?
- In what ways does having money give us power?
- Can one empower another person or community?
- What is the status quo?
- How does a person or community gain power or privilege?

## ‘Briars in the Cotton Patch’ reflection

### INTRODUCTION

This resource is intended to guide group conversations about the *Briars in the Cotton Patch* documentary about the Koinonia community, using any questions most useful to each group’s objectives. Some questions are intentionally broad, leaving room for different interpretations, and facilitators should be prepared for wide-ranging conversations. We suggest reserving time at the end of your discussion to contemplate follow-up activities.

Immediately after viewing the film, consider giving people a few minutes to quietly reflect. This could be silence in which to jot down their thoughts or to reflect on general questions like those below:

- What feelings came up for you while watching *Briars in the Cotton Patch*?
- If you could ask a question of someone in the film, whom would it be, and what would you ask?
- The word “briar” is used to describe Koinonia and those associated with it. What do you think of when you hear that word? What does a briar do in the way it is used here?

### ‘BRIARS IN THE SOCIAL FABRIC’ (2:48)

Millard Fuller opens the film by saying about Clarence Jordan: “He was saying things that were unpopular. He was challenging conventional wisdom. ... The thing that pricked people the most here in Southwest Georgia was the consistent way that Koinonia kept saying [that] black folks are as good as white folks. So I think Koinonia did serve as a briar or as an irritant in society.”

- What are your thoughts about Clarence Jordan and Koinonia having held so consistently to their message of racial equality throughout the years and in the face of opposition?

### ‘BRIARS IN THE SUPREME COURT’ (9:15)

May 17, 1954, marked the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision outlawing segregation in public schools. That was the year Koinonia had decided to have a summer camp for a diverse group of children, black and white. Before the camp began, “they brought an injunction that we could not open the camp because the buildings were a fire hazard.” Then, “when it looked like the county didn’t have any charge at all, after the health inspector had made his inspection, the county was about to drop it and four farmers asked to intervene in the case, saying they wanted to bring charges not that the camp would be a health menace, but that it would be a moral menace — that it would endanger the morals of the children who might attend. The reason for it, they said, was that some of the children might see baby pigs being born on the farm.”

- What do you think about this claim about baby pigs? Does this remind you of any current situations? How so?

### ‘BRIARS IN SUMTER COUNTY (11:36)

Terrorism visits Koinonia after Clarence Jordan is asked to sponsor the first black applicants to the Georgia Business College in Atlanta in March 1956. There was a drive-by shooting one evening in which there was “shooting out of the car over the kids’ heads”; the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in front of a home, setting the home on fire; and, while children were reading bedtime stories, machine gun bullets went through the wall “right between their heads.” Con Browne, a former Koinonia Partner, reflects, “Things happen, and you wonder how in the world it could happen like that.”

- Con Browne seems to have been in disbelief about what was happening. How does one’s background, mindset and experiences influence the reaction to such occurrences? Is it possible that others with different experiences would not have been so surprised, even if they were equally scared?

During the violence at Koinonia, Clarence Jordan’s son, Jim, remembers that “We had to say to some of our dear friends, who were black families in the neighborhood, ‘Don’t worry. Don’t feel bad. We understand. You don’t need to

come over here. You don't need to show your support.” Bobby Mathis, a black resident of Americus, remembers, “The word ‘Koinonia’ in the black community was extinct. You just didn’t use that word. ... Your parents would sit you down and say ... ‘You don’t go to Koinonia.’” Carranza Morgan, the rare black farmer who owned his own land, and whose wife worked at Koinonia, snuck fertilizer into Koinonia at night for fear of being caught because of the economic boycott of the farm.

- How do fear and intimidation serve to separate people who might support the same cause? How do they weaken relationships between people with the same values?

After Clarence Jordan wrote to Dwight Eisenhower in January 1957, the letter was forwarded to the governor of Georgia. “The state attorney general got involved and basically sicced the GBI, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, on Koinonia; contributors to Koinonia were investigated”; and the Sumter County Grand Jury concluded that Koinonia was “responsible for the violence itself” and was linked to the Communist Party. Leonard Waitsman, a member of that grand jury, looks back on it as “a trumped-up thing.”

- What do you think of the idea that a victim of violence can be responsible for having caused the violence? What effect can such verdicts have at the time they are issued? What longer-lasting social effects can they have?

As Dallas Lee, author of *Cotton Patch Evidence*, explains, “Koinonia Farm struggled down there in very dangerous circumstances, and the local media did not cover those things, or you’d find these little bitty stories if you look in the record that says the roadside stand was blown up or the sheriff went out to investigate a report of shots. But nobody was getting to the bottom of that story, so the good-hearted people of Sumter County were never confronted by the truth.”

- Has the role of the media changed since 1957? How has the responsibility of average people for getting information out to the public changed? What responsibility do “good-hearted people” have to educate themselves? How can they do it?

### ‘BRIARS IN THE CONSCIENCE’ (22:38)

“I don’t think they are vicious devils,” Clarence Jordan said. “I think they are people with the good and the evil, and it’s pulling against them. There is this struggle between an ideal and a tradition that exerts a tremendous pull in their lives.”

- What do you think of this idea? What “pulls” between an ideal and a tradition have you witnessed or experienced? What have you learned from them?

In 1957, Clarence Jordan wrote an open letter from Koinonia, and it was met with bullets ripping through signs, a gasoline pump and dwellings; bombs shattering roadside stands; beehives destroyed; and pecan and fruit trees chopped down. The story of Koinonia was slowly getting out, as evidenced by a *Report to the People* broadcast from New York City. The situation came to a head when a white-owned store in Americus was bombed for selling supplies to Koinonia when there was a boycott against them. A week later, a group of citizens went to Koinonia to speak to Jordan, led by Charles Crisp. In the audio of the meeting, Crisp is heard to say that, “Our philosophy is that the first duty of a Christian would be peace on earth, goodwill to men, to make brotherly love in the community. Unfortunately, your experiment has not done that. It has set brother against brother. It has created bitterness. It has created hatred. It has created every emotion that is contrary to my concept of Christianity.” The president of the local chamber of commerce, Frank Myers, was one of the businessmen at the meeting. He recalls that he asked Koinonia to leave “for the good of the community and themselves.” “I don’t think that part of it was out of line,” he recalls, “because it was dangerous for everybody. But the fact that I went [to the meeting] in itself, I regret. I didn’t have any guts at that time.”

- Think about everything that was going on at the time and put yourself in Frank Myers' shoes. What would it look like to you to "have guts" under similar circumstances? What is one's personal responsibility in such situations? Are there things that people can do to help each other act courageously?

### **'BRIARS IN AMERICUS HIGH SCHOOL' (29:35)**

In September 1960, Koinonia went to court when the local school board refused to let their children attend Americus high school. It was the first time white children had been denied access to a white high school. Though the federal District Court ruled for Koinonia, the children of Koinonia suffered years of scorn and rejection.

- Should parents or adults in general protect children from these types of experiences during times of social strife? Why or why not? If so, how can it be done?

### **'BRIARS IN CIVIL RIGHTS' (33:48)**

Veterans of the civil rights movement of the 1960s still call Americus and Sumter County one of the meanest places in America during that time. In the summer of 1965, Americus was as nationally notorious as Selma, Alabama, and during this time, Clarence Jordan's teenage daughter, Jan, told her father she felt she needed to be part of one of the demonstrations, saying, "I need to show support. I need to show them that I'm a part of it, that I'm doing something." Her father answered that though he could shoot Sheriff Chappell in order to be "doing something," it wouldn't be right and that if she were to be arrested in the march he would not get her out of jail. However, he explained, if she and one of her black girl friends were to go into Walgreens and get arrested, he would "go all the way to the Supreme Court with you, because what you're doing is right and what should be done. But not when you get in the streets and march."

- According to Jan, her father's philosophy on life was that he would never step aside but he would not create trouble. What are your thoughts on this philosophy? What do you think is the difference between the two scenarios that Clarence outlines for his daughter?

### **'BRIARS IN THE CONGREGATION' (40:07)**

As the film points out, by the late 1960s America was on its way to an integrated society "except, it seems, among the pews," when the weekly time of church services appeared to be "the most segregated hour." Some white parishioners in Americus acted to keep it that way.

- How much has integration in congregations changed? Why or why not?

### **'BRIARS IN TRANSITION' (43:48)**

In 1968, Clarence Jordan and Millard Fuller, former Koinonia Partner and founder of Habitat for Humanity, marked off 42 half-acre plots on Koinonia Farm. Clarence had proposed a Fund for Humanity that would buy and hold land where families could farm and build houses in partnership. According to Millard, Clarence had said that, "If you're going to be an authentic disciple of Jesus, you have to take Jesus seriously, try to understand what his message really was about, and incorporate it in our daily lives. And that is why we started building houses. That was a relevant need."

- What are the "relevant needs" today? Are those needs being met? Why or why not?

In the film, it is said about Clarence Jordan, "He was special. I don't think I've ever met anybody that was down to help people like he was. And all what they did to him, he didn't change and he didn't leave. He held on."

- What makes the type of tenacity that Clarence Jordan demonstrated possible? How can one cultivate that characteristic in themselves and spur it in others?

In 1974, after the Fuller family went on a missionary trip to Africa and put some of Clarence Jordan's philosophies into practice, they brought Habitat for Humanity back to Americus. When Habitat first came to Americus, there was a fair amount of suspicion about it, presumably because of its links to Koinonia. Lang Sheffield, an Americus resident, remembers that, "It soon became evident, after Habitat built a few houses and they traded with local merchants and they paid their bills on time [and] they definitely all displayed a Christian attitude, that most of the people in the community actually favored what they were doing." Contrast this with the words of Charles Crisp, who led a group of businessmen to Koinonia in 1957 to try to persuade Clarence Jordan to leave: "Our philosophy is that the first duty of a Christian would be peace on earth, goodwill to men to make brotherly love in the community. Unfortunately, your experiment has not done that. It has set brother against brother. It has created bitterness. It has created hatred. It has created every emotion that is contrary to my concept of Christianity."

- Koinonia and Habitat for Humanity did not receive the same level of acceptance by Sumter County. Why do you think that is? What are the differences between the two that made this the case?

### **'BRIARS TODAY & FOR THE FUTURE' (52:06)**

The Rev. David Good of Koinonia's board asks, "When you think about how divided the world was in 1942 when Clarence Jordan started Koinonia, we were badly divided along racial lines. Do we have those same kind of divisions today?"

- How would you answer his question?

Consider this quote from the end of the film: "One of our biggest challenges is that we have become acceptable. When you become acceptable, you run the risk of becoming mediocre. Our greatest fear is that we would lose our prophetic edge, and we need to fear mediocrity more than failure."

- Do you agree? What can this philosophy tell us about how we should be operating in the face of today's relevant needs?

Andrew Young asks, "Has Koinonia Farm really become acceptable, or is it simply that this country over the past half-century has moved closer to Koinonia's once radical notion of racial equality and harmony? America will always need briars like Koinonia to pierce our comfortable lifestyles and make us think carefully about where we are going. These briars in the cotton patch have successfully survived because, like it or not, we need them."

- What do you agree or disagree with about this statement? In what ways are briars needed now? What can you do to be a needed briar?

## Culture crossing

### In-country learning activity: Universal, cultural or personal

The differences between universal, cultural and personal behaviors occur in all cultures. Try to find examples of each in your host country. Spend some time in the streets observing the people around you and try to note four examples of each category of behavior. For personal behaviors, you may find it easier to observe people you know well, such as people at work or in your host family. When you have completed this exercise, it may be helpful to show your list to someone else to get that person's reactions.

#### Universal

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Cultural

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Personal

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL CONDITIONING

How do people acquire their culture? How do they learn all the behaviors that are regarded as right and wrong in their society? This process, known as cultural conditioning, goes on in all cultures, but the specific behaviors that people acquire — the precise content of their conditioning — varies considerably from group to group. Keep in mind that while it is behaviors that people learn through this process, they are automatically learning and internalizing the values and beliefs behind those behaviors. When you understand how this process works, you can then understand how two people from different cultures can behave in radically different ways and both be completely convinced they are right.

Conditioning occurs mostly in early childhood, but adults continue to be conditioned as they acquire new behaviors throughout their life. There are differences between the two:

- In childhood conditioning, infants and young children learn such basic activities of life as eating, walking, talking, dressing, bathing, etc.
- In adult conditioning, people learn new behaviors or new ways to perform already conditioned behaviors, such as learning to use a Turkish toilet or eating with your hands rather than with silverware.

Though the steps are the same in each case, one difference in adult conditioning is that it often requires unlearning or unacquiring behavior that was already acquired through childhood conditioning, and this can take longer. Here are the five steps in the process of cultural conditioning:

- **Observation/instruction:** At this stage, you are only beginning to become aware of a particular behavior but have not yet tried to do it yourself. Taking the example of eating with your hands, you may have observed how it is done, or someone may have told you how it is done.
- **Imitation:** Now you actually try to carry out the activity. You sit down at a table and begin eating with your hands. At this stage, it is awkward for you, and you're conscious all the while of what you're doing, trying not to make mistakes. You may have difficulty concentrating on a conversation, for all your attention is on the act of eating.
- **Reinforcement:** As you eat, people encourage you when you do it right and correct you when you are wrong. Over the course of several meals, you naturally try to do what they tell you.
- **Internalization:** Without needing much reinforcement, over time and with practice, you now know how to eat with your hands. You may still have to pay attention to what you're doing, but not as much as during stages 2 and 3.
- **Spontaneous manifestation:** Now you're able to eat "the right way" without paying any conscious attention to what you're doing. It comes naturally; as you eat, you're aware of other things, not the act of eating.

People have to learn most of their behavior. After they learn it, they come to regard that behavior as natural and normal — for everyone.

### In-country learning activity: Cultural conditioning

Try to think of various behaviors you are in the process of learning or relearning as you adjust to your host country and what stage you are in vis-à-vis that behavior. Try to write down a behavior for each of the five stages as you think of the following:

- Something you are just becoming aware of and perhaps observing closely but not yet doing.
- Something you have just begun to try doing.
- Something you've done once or twice but haven't mastered yet.
- Something you have recently mastered.
- Something you now do without thinking.

### IN THE MIND OF THE BEHOLDER

We all believe that we observe things as they are, but the mind interprets what the eyes see and gives it meaning. It is only at this point, when meaning is assigned, that we can truly say we have seen something. In other words, what we see is as much in the mind as it is in reality. If you consider that the mind of a person from one culture is going to be different in many ways from the mind of a person from another culture, then you have the explanation for that most fundamental of all cross-cultural problems: the fact that two people look upon the same reality, the same example of behavior, and see two entirely different things.

Any behavior observed across the cultural divide, therefore, has to be interpreted in two ways:

- The meaning given to it by the person who does the action.
- The meaning given to it by the person who observes the action.

Only when these two meanings are the same do we have successful communication, in the sense that the meaning that was intended by the doer is the one that was understood by the observer.

A given behavior has no built-in meaning; it means whatever the observer decides it means.

### Exercise: In the mind of the beholder

In the first part of this exercise, read the description of the eight instances of behavior given below and write down your immediate response to or interpretation of that behavior in terms of your own cultural values, beliefs or perception. An example has been provided for the first one.

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the stated starting time.  
*Your interpretation: This person is late and should at least apologize or give an explanation.*
2. Someone kicks a dog.  
*Your interpretation:*
3. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly.  
*Your interpretation:*
4. Someone makes the OK gesture at you.  
*Your interpretation:*
5. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing.  
*Your interpretation:*
6. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen.  
*Your interpretation:*
7. A young man and a young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench.  
*Your interpretation:*
8. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student.  
*Your interpretation:*

## Exercise: In the mind of the beholder, part 2

In the second part of this activity, you are asked to imagine how these same eight behaviors would be perceived or interpreted by someone from a culture different from your own. The particular cultural difference is described in each case. Read each behavior and the description of the culture, and then write in the space provided how you think a person from such a culture would interpret that behavior.

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the stated starting time. How would this act be interpreted:
  - By someone from a culture where people always arrive half an hour after the stated starting time?  
*Interpretation:*
  - By someone from a culture where people always start on time?  
*Interpretation:*
2. Someone kicks a dog. How would this act be interpreted:
  - By someone from a country where dogs always carry disease?  
*Interpretation:*
  - By someone from a country where most dogs are wild and vicious?  
*Interpretation:*
3. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly. How would this be interpreted:
  - By someone from a culture where belching is the normal way to compliment the food?  
*Interpretation:*
4. Someone makes the OK gesture at you. How would this be interpreted:
  - By someone in whose culture this gesture is obscene?  
*Interpretation:*
  - By someone in whose culture this gesture has romantic connotations?  
*Interpretation:*
5. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing. How would this be interpreted:
  - By someone from a culture where women are proud of their strength and ability to work hard?  
*Interpretation:*
6. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen. How would this act be interpreted:
  - By men from a culture where men never clean up after a meal?  
*Interpretation:*
  - By the hostess from that same culture?  
*Interpretation:*
7. A young man and a young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench. How would this act be interpreted:
  - By someone from a culture where men and women never touch in public?  
*Interpretation:*
8. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student. How would this act be interpreted:
  - By someone from a culture where exams are not fair and are designed to eliminate students at various stages of the education system?  
*Interpretation:*

- By someone from a culture where it is shameful not to help your friend if you are able to?

*Interpretation:*

### Journal entry

Use this space to react to or reflect on anything you might have learned in this chapter. Write whatever you like: notes to yourself, questions, feelings, fears, doubts. Here are some questions you might want to consider:

- What did you learn about culture in this chapter that you didn't know before?
- What was the most important fact you learned?
- Do you now understand something about the local people that you didn't before?

## Preparing to return home

Re-entry is the “hidden side” of a Global Village trip. It is commonly referred to as “reverse culture shock.” Team members might have been shocked when they arrived at the host destination and saw poverty firsthand. They might be just as shocked upon returning home — by how those around them live, the wastefulness, the materialism and the views toward those less fortunate.

Reverse culture shock is common among Global Village team members who are returning from having been immersed in a new and different culture — one that is usually much more economically depressed than they are used to. It might seem as if they have been away for months, but home has remained relatively unchanged. The Global Village experience can trigger changes in the team members’ perspectives and priorities.

The team leader needs to be aware of the potential impact of re-entry and help team members prepare to integrate back into their daily lives. There are typically four stages: fun, flight, fight and fit. Understanding re-entry is the first step toward addressing it.

## Common feelings of re-entry

Knowing what to expect goes a long way toward softening the blow of re-entry. The following are a few emotions that returning team members commonly experience.

### ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Having experienced poverty up close, some team members might feel isolated upon returning home.

They might feel lonely, as if marooned on an island — alienated, with no one around, at least no one who views the world the same way they do. They might find themselves withdrawing: writing letters, reading books, not socializing as they had before the trip.

One solution is to contact the team leader or a teammate who has experienced similar feelings.

### REBELLION

Rebellion can create problems if left unaddressed. When team members return home and find that few of their friends and associates share their passion for the cause of poverty housing, some team members rebel, sometimes becoming angry at those who do not empathize. They might view negatively the lifestyles and values of those who previously were their friends. These feelings must be addressed.

One solution is to seek support from someone who has been through the stress of re-entry and can empathize. A clergy member, team leader or teammate can offer that support. Often, all the stressed team member needs is a sounding board. It is OK to be angry, but the feelings must pass without striking out toward others.

### DISILLUSIONMENT

It is not uncommon for returning team members to experience disillusionment. They left a perfectly satisfactory world only to return seeing it through different eyes. Being immersed in a culture and setting much different from one’s own can be a life-altering experience. It is not unusual for team members to begin questioning the values of their previous lifestyles. Things that once were important now have little value.

One solution is to prepare a list of what is important in one’s life. The writer must be realistic and consider those things that are basic necessities and how one would live without them. The team leader, a teammate or someone who has experienced re-entry can be of great help to someone struggling with the disillusionment associated with returning home.

## GUILT

Upon returning home, Global Village team members are quick to recognize that they are living in a much better environment than the people in the country they have visited. Some feel guilty that they have so much and so many have so little.

One solution is to talk about the feelings of guilt with the team leader or a teammate, and find ways to promote positive change and be of service.

It is the team leader's responsibility to advise team members of the common feelings they might experience upon returning home, and then be available to discuss those feelings with individual team members when they need an empathetic ear. Consider sharing some of your feelings upon returning home after your first Global Village trip.

Team members eventually recognize the similarities and appreciate the differences between the host country and their own culture and place in life.

## Addressing re-entry in the field

Talking about what team members are feeling is the first step toward dealing with re-entry. Toward the end of the trip, the feelings associated with re-entry will likely become a topic at reflection gatherings and other team meetings. The subject definitely should be on the agenda for the final team meeting. Follow the "four stages of re-entry": fun, flight, fight and fit.

## TOPICS TO ADDRESS

- Ask team members to think about their expectations for returning home.
- Encourage team members to keep in touch with one another.
- Let them know they can call the team leader to talk.

## RE-ENTRY SUGGESTIONS

The Global Village trip itself can alter one's perspective, but the way a team member responds to the trip upon returning home can be life-changing. Suggest that team members try these helpful hints:

- Identify a person or group who will listen to their story.
- If they have told everyone else as much as they are ready to hear, contact the team leader.
- Build plenty of rest into their re-entry schedule.
- Expect to go through a "low" period or a "grief" period.

## RE-ENTRY FANTASIES

Typically, there are a number of fantasies associated with re-entry. If team members understand these fantasies, they can identify them.

- I will write everyone I meet!
  - Be realistic and honest. If you tell someone you will write, write.
  - If you give your address to someone, expect them to write.
  - Realize that you might receive family updates, but also solicitations.
  - Be prepared for the possibility that someone might write to ask for something.
- People are dying to see and hear about my trip.
  - They are — for the first five minutes. Typically, friends' or family members' eyes begin to glaze over when you start to ramble on about the great people you met, the work you did, the touching closing ceremony and those funny inside jokes that left you aching from laughter.

- Prepare a specific story about a lesson you learned or someone you met, and stick to it.
- Put together the best of your favorite pictures that accurately represent your experience.
- I will be glad to be home.
  - Yes, you will. But be prepared for feelings of reverse culture shock.
  - Call or email team members for empathy.
  - Think about how you would like this trip to affect your daily life.
- I am going to give away everything I own!
  - We have heard this before; some have done it, but most only fantasize.
  - Others have made smaller positive modifications in their lives.
  - Thoughtfully consider how you would like your trip experiences to affect your life.

Many people may find it difficult to understand a team member's re-entry emotions. They have not experienced the emotion of seeing, feeling and living, however briefly, the poverty that engulfs so many and saying goodbye to new friends. However, the emotions are real and something returning team members must be prepared to manage. The astute team leader can help prepare his or her members for a gentle transition back into their daily routines.

## Advice from the community

### Best practices from the team leader community

Our team leader community has created a few best practices and traditions for their reflection meetings. See if any of these ideas work for you or spark ideas of your own.

- **Start light:** “For the first two reflection meetings, I start light, as the team is still getting to know each other. For the first one, I choose a simple icebreaker. As the week goes on, the questions get deeper.”
- **Journal:** “I have a journal I give to each team member to write their reflections for the day. Each day a different member reflects in the journal. We then go over that reflection the next day on the way to the build site.”
- **A place and time that works for you:** “I’ve found that reflection meetings held after dinner are not the best option, as people are either tired or may be going out that night. I prefer to have them right after the build or during dinner. Pick a place that’s private so the team can share authentically.”
- **Final reflection idea:** “I also have a final reflection meeting after celebration day, and we go around the circle. I ask each team member to share one memory or one thing they appreciate about one other member on the team. This gives everyone a chance to participate and ends the build on a good note. I often prepare something about each team member and say that while I’m sharing something about everyone, they only have to share about one person. I also forewarn them that I’ll be doing this, so they have the whole week to think about it.”
- **Continued engagement reflection meeting:** “I use the final two meetings to decide how we will continue our engagement with each other and support for Habitat. Members decide on future builds, advocacy campaigns and working with their local affiliate. My volunteers typically go home and either sign up for another build or donate to others almost immediately. Last year was all the more helpful that by the time I was leading in Nicaragua, I already had Argentina dates lined up, so it was easy to get people to commit.”





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