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Running Well and Resting Well: Twelve Tools for Missionary Life

Mission personnel need a variety of supportive resources to help them grow personally and remain effective. This article presents 12 tools that missionaries can use during the different phases of missionary life. These tools can be adapted for your use.

There are two metaphors in the book of Hebrews which are especially relevant for mission personnel. These two metaphors are the intertwining, balancing concepts of running with endurance the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1,2) and being diligent to enter into His rest (Hebrews 4:9-11). Simply put, we need to “run well” and “rest well”.

Running well involves staying focused on Jesus so that we are not distracted by anything which hinders our life with and work for Him. Resting well means embracing the atoning work of Christ, so that in knowing His deep love for us, we can be at peace with and renewed in Him. Both of these concepts are foundational for our health throughout the various phases of the missionary life cycle. From recruitment through retirement, they impart a healthy balance between our “doing and being”.

The same discipline that Paul said is needed to “run to win”(I Corinthians 9:24-27) is also needed so that we can “rest to win” (Matthew 11:25-30). Think of member care as a discipline. It is a personal, community, and specialized practice--an *intentional* practice-- to help renew us and remain resilient.

In this article we share 12 growth tools which are exercises that can be done by individuals, couples, teams, families, departments, and organizations. These tools can be used during some of all of the different stages of the missionary life cycle.

- Pre-field--recruitment, selection/candidacy, deputation, training
- Field--first term, additional terms, change in job/location/organization
- Reentry--furlough, home assignment, returning to the field later in life
- Post-field--end of service, retirement.

For more information on the missionary life cycle as well as exercises for personal growth, see Morgan, 2001; O'Donnell, 1988; O'Donnell, 1992; chapter 23 on helping ourselves and others, especially the CHOPS Inventory; and chapter 38 on team resiliency, including the reference section.

Selection Criteria--The Eleven C's For the Seven Seas

This worksheet explores 11 important factors which should be assessed prior to becoming part of an organization or a team. Each criterion begins with the letter “C”, hence the name of the worksheet. It can be used for screening potential workers--by individuals themselves considering becoming candidates as well as by organizations. Newly formed teams can use this worksheet as a point of departure to discuss who they are, their backgrounds, and their motivations and expectations for the team. It can also be useful for teams going through a major transition period, such as a change in goals or the addition of new members.

- *Calling to vocation*: to your job/profession, to a country, to a people, to the organization, to the team, spiritual "call"
 - *Character*: emotional stability, resiliency, strong and weak points
 - *Competence*: your gifts and skills, training, preparation and experience
 - *Commitment*: to "calling", job, cross-cultural work, organization, team, people
 - *Christian experience*: spirituality, previous related work
 - *Cross-cultural experience*: some background living and relating with people from different cultures
 - *Compatibility*: with team goals, organizational ethos and doctrine, cultural, relational, spoken and unspoken expectations
 - *Confirmation*: from family, friends, organization, church, inner peace
 - *Corporal health*: overall physical wellness
 - *Cash*: financial assets and one's overall support network
 - *Care network*: friends and senders to encourage and support the worker.
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Screening for Workers:

Ten Areas for Assessing Suitability for Service

This material is based on a modified clinical interview to help identify significant personal problems in potential staff. We developed this sheet in response to the requests of several field leaders who were in "isolated" settings and who could not easily consult with a mental health specialist. Many of these leaders were dealing with team members who had never been adequately screened and whose personal problems were disrupting team life. This material is intended to be used by mission leaders with personnel responsibility and training. Note though that in some countries such as the USA, there are legal requirements to not “discriminate” in the selection process based on mental or other disabilities, and that job-related skills are the focus of assessment rather than personal struggles.

Some Suggestions. During the interview process, try to make the experience as supportive as possible. Remember, in some ways you may be interviewing each other, as they are also assessing the work setting. Be friendly and establish rapport. Remember to ask questions in a non-threatening way, highlighting their strengths though not being afraid to ask hard questions. Be sensitive to the person's cultural background and possible need for a translator. Clearly state the conditions for confidentiality, the purpose and procedure for the interview, and how the shared information will be used.

Avoid making quick judgments concerning suitability based only on first impressions. Remember that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, so be sure to explore previous experiences. Ask for specific examples, and do not be content with vague or general answers. Be sure to use this sheet in conjunction with references, past performance appraisals, an interview with the spouse, and a thorough application form that also includes questions about children (behavioral problems, anxiety or emotional struggles, peer relationships, developmental delays, learning difficulties). Whenever possible, seek out the advice of a mental health professional, even if it be through e-mail. Finally, the main concern is not that a person may have struggles, but what they are doing to grow and help resolve such struggles.

1. Current interests and concerns: How do you spend your time? What things do you like most to do? Favorite reading materials and books? How are you feeling these days? Do you have any problems sleeping or eating or any medical problems? Are you using medication? How is your diet and

nutrition? Would you like to share about any personal concerns or struggles? (establish rapport and ease into the interview; maybe save the last question until later--point four below--although if they are going through a current crisis, talking about this right away may be helpful)

2. Relationships: Please describe the quality of relationships with others now--friends, leaders, colleagues, spouse and children. Any marital problems? What are some marital strengths? Describe some positive and negative past team experiences. Is it easy/difficult for you to forgive someone (examples)? Discuss your relationship with leadership/authorities. (how they will do in a team setting and under stressful circumstances)

3. Family history: Have family members suffered from a serious mental disorder? Marital instability? Child abuse, alcoholism, or general family dysfunction? What do people in your family think about your work? (what family issues/dysfunctions--current family and family of origin-might they be bringing with them?)

4. Clinical problems: Is there any past or current history of: depression (significant times of feeling worthless, helpless, discouraged), anxiety (excessive concern about a person, event, situation), phobias (unusual fears of people, objects, experiences), bulimia/anorexia (problems with eating and purging or simply not eating, accompanied by weight changes), suicidal ideas (have they tried to hurt themselves or others), sexual addictions (pornography, compulsive masturbation, etc.), violence/poor anger management, substance abuse/addiction (including large doses of coffee/tea), gambling addictions/poor money management, delusions and hallucinations (significant problems in the way they think or perceive the world--e.g., preoccupation with being persecuted or followed, exaggerated sense of importance/grandiosity) learning disabilities (e.g., significant problems with reading, writing), previous traumas, burnout (being incapacitated physically and emotionally due to chronic levels of stress), unwanted habits, grief and bereavement (loss due to death, multiple moves, job change, etc.), hormonal imbalance, legal problems/arrests, occult involvement? Have you tried to get help in these areas and if so how? (you may have to define these in terms of specific symptoms but it is very important to explore these areas in concrete ways; some areas to probe which could uncover problems include sleep activity, interest in things one usually enjoys, guilt, energy, time with friends, fears, concentration, appetite, sexuality)

5. Previous help/treatment: Any psychiatric hospitalizations or outpatient therapy? Medical problems/surgery or head traumas? (have they been under the care of medical or mental health professionals, for how long and for what reasons? do not gloss over this!)

6. Work performance: What setting will you be working in and what types of stressors will you face? How have you done in past work positions? Discuss reasons for leaving previous jobs. Identify the type of leadership you work best with? What types of leadership experiences and positions have you had? Refer to any testing results if known. (how might they fit in the new work setting given their past work experiences and preferences?)

7. Spiritual issues: How is their relationship with God? How much time is spent in prayer and Bible reading each day/week, fellowship with Christians, involvement in a church, and any areas where they feel stuck. (look for honest appraisal of spirituality, not getting too spiritual or overemphasizing either their importance or what God is doing through them)

8. Personal characteristics: Have the person identify a few personal qualities that are positive and some that are negative. How might his/her positive characteristics help/hinder a team/setting where he/she might work? (explore their capacity for openness and insight)

9. Observations during interview: Note the appearance, clothing, hygiene, facial expressions, behavior, unusual mannerisms, emotions displayed, speech/unusual words, thought content, eye con-

tact, posture. (how do they relate to you, can you connect with them interpersonally, what is your "gut-level" feeling?; beware of your own possible distortions/biases!)

10. Additional: Comments, other areas to assess further, questions he/she has for you.

Thirteen Survival Premises/Promises

Have you ever had a look at your assumptions regarding what it takes to do well in missions? We all have certain assumptions about how life and missions work. Let's explore some of them. Read through the 13 statements below. Think about each one and apply it to your life. Which ones make sense to you? What other assumptions would you list? Try doing this together as a group exercise with your team or department.

- 1. Life is difficult, regardless of where you are located and what you are doing. Only people trying to sell you something might say something different.
- 2. We are created human and called to be mission workers, not the other way around. A human doing is not a human being.
- 3. Failure and casualties are inevitable in mission work.
- 4. The grass might be greener on the other side, but the manure is just as deep. It's probably the manure that makes it greener.
- 5. You can try to do anything in life you want; you only have to face the consequences.
- 6. With enough time and effort we still can not accomplish everything that we want.
- 7. The ideal team member never joins a team.
- 8. The "healthy" are usually too "healthy" to become frontline workers.
- 9. You are really someone special but you are really not so special.
- 10. More people would be involved in missions if there were more unreached people groups living in Switzerland and Hawaii.
- 11. You may never know why.
- 12. You probably have many other assumptions, some of which you may not be aware.
- 13. These 13 premises are actually promises.

Note--Originally published in the special member care issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (October, 1995). Used by permission.

Some Core Challenges of Missionaries

This is a discussion tool to explore some of the core issues of missionary life. It can be used by individuals or groups. By "core" we mean those inner struggles that we wrestle with--the matters of the heart--which are often stimulated by external circumstances or problems. Try to identify how each of these issues is or has been part of your life, your family, and/or your team. What helps you work through these issues? What other areas would you include as being core challenges?

- Forgiveness**--holding on to perceived injustices which arise from conflict with colleagues, the host culture, frustration with oneself, etc.
- Staying centered**--remaining connected with self and God in the midst of many responsibilities and the demands of living
- Focusing on others' interest**--self-preoccupation to the exclusion of others' needs; not checking in to see how other people around us are doing
- Drifting**--getting off the main tasks and the reason why we work in missions, via distractions, interruptions, avoiding responsibility, etc.
- Transitional grief**--the pain from saying many good-byes, multiple moves, missing loved ones, unresolved relationship issues, etc.

•**Contentment**--being satisfied in knowing that one is obeying God, in spite of minimal work results, pressures to perform, and limited sense of fulfillment in one's work

•**Pessimism**--loosing perspective on the good things in life subsequent to the chronic exposure to human problems and misery

•**The Midlife Club**--searching for "greener grass on the other side of the fence", often characteristic of those in mid-life and in missions for 10 plus years. Some examples:

Club Mediterranean--"Yes God, I hear you calling me to work with the affluent in the Bahamas and Beverly Hills. Please?"

Club Mediocrity--"I am out of touch with my field and the work world back home. What can I do? I am out of date. I guess I have no where else to go except to stay in missions."

Club Middle Manager--"God is calling me now to supervise others, after having worked on the field for awhile. Great, I was getting tired of it anyway. Now I'll be a consultant in a "safer" position. I can help from afar, help from a computer screen, and help support the missions 'machine'. Hey, I can tell younger people what to do."

Club Midlife Bulge--"I don't wanna do nothin'. I've earned the break and the fancy car. I've put in my time. I just wanna get fat."

Club Miscellaneous--list your favorite club(s) here. Some examples:

Club Martyr--"I need to "club" myself and feel perpetually guilty for something I did or did not do in the past.

Club Martini--"I probably won't admit it but I am developing a compulsive habit to avoid dealing with inner areas of pain, like the reality of aging, limited achievement, ongoing family tensions, etc., and covering up the pain by seeking out experiences that sedate or stimulate me."

[Note August 2006: other core issues can include finances, family, etc.]

Personal Growth Plan

The purpose is to plan for, stimulate, and monitor your own growth--growth in your character, skills, and spirituality. Complete this worksheet (or something like it) once a year and talk about it with a friend or leader.

Part One--Personal Profile

1. List your current interests--things you do which give you personal satisfaction and pleasure (like reading, sports, music).
2. List your current dislikes--things you do which you do not enjoy or feel you are good at (teaching, poor habits, exercise).
3. Describe a few of your strengths.
4. Describe some of your limitations and growth areas.
5. List your current work responsibilities. Summarize your job as clearly in one sentence.
6. List any other responsibilities you have (personal, professional, social, family).
7. How do your current responsibilities compare with your stated interests/strengths and limitations/dislikes?
8. What would you like to be doing in the next five years? Write a brief statement about your future roles and responsibilities--both personal and work-related.
9. What are you doing to further your spiritual life? Be specific. List areas of struggle
10. What helps you maintain emotional stability and keeps you emotionally healthy? What do you do and how often?
11. In what ways do you continue your learning and build upon your strengths/skills?
12. Describe your relationship with your family here/back home. Any areas to improve?
13. Describe your relationship with your team/department/work community. Any areas to improve?

14. Describe your relationship with the local community/nationals. Any areas to improve?

Part Two--Personal and Professional Development Plan

Based on your previous answers, identify at least five specific objectives that you want to accomplish this year. Choose objectives that are reasonably obtainable and that can be measured. Set dates for when you want to have them completed. For example, loose five kilograms by September 1, read two books on cross-cultural relief work within the next three months, or raise my support level by 50% by the end of the year. Outline the steps you will take to accomplish each objective. Be specific. Also describe how you will evaluate your progress. Here is a short example.

Objective 1: Send newsletters to 50 friends three times a year.

Date: Mail newsletters in late April, August, and December.

Strategy: Address envelopes in advance, keep newsletter to two pages, revise it twice, include a one-page insert of interest.

Assessment: Show team leader each newsletter, ask for feedback from a few supporters on the content and style of the newsletter.

Note--This exercise is based on a self-assessment tool put together by the Personnel Department of the US Center for World Missions in California. Used by permission.

Job Feedback Form

This form will help you look at how your overall team/department is doing. It is intended to stimulate mutual feedback between you and your supervisor/leader and between group members when done as a joint exercise. It is also meant to complement but not replace the use of performance appraisals. Your assessment will hopefully lead to constructive changes for you and your work. Use the five point scale below to rate the following 15 areas. Feel free to make additional comments for any of the items.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Strongly Disagree Basically Agree Strongly Agree

1. The objectives of my team/department are clear to me.

Rating_____Comments:

2. The objectives were formed with ample discussion and prayer.

Rating_____Comments:

3. I am involved in the decision making process in my work area.

Rating_____Comments:

4. We meet often enough as a group.

Rating_____Comments:

5. There is a good sense of team spirit in our work.

Rating_____Comments:

6. The communication process is adequate within our group.

Rating_____Comments:

7. I understand what is expected of me.

Rating_____Comments:

8. I receive timely and sufficient feedback on my work.

Rating_____Comments:

9. I feel respected and encouraged by my leader/supervisor.

Rating _____ Comments:

10. I feel encouraged and respected by my colleagues.

Rating _____ Comments:

11. I regularly try to encourage and support my colleagues.

Rating _____ Comments:

12. My communication with my leader/supervisor is adequate.

Rating _____ Comments:

13. I have sufficient time to fulfill my responsibilities.

Rating _____ Comments:

14. I am growing as a person as a result of my work involvement.

Rating _____ Comments:

15. Overall I am satisfied with and enjoy my work.

Rating _____ Comments:

- Your overall rating (total divided by 15):
 - The composite score for your group (total scores divided by 15 then divided by the number of people in the group):
 - Please make any additional comments on the following areas: ways to improve the work we do; ways to work better as a team; personal areas/struggles for me that affect my work; any additional concerns or suggestions.
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Routine Debriefing Interview

The purpose of a debriefing session is to help a worker(s) review his/her experience on the job. This debriefing is more of a routine nature, and is not intended to be used with crisis workers or those who go through a traumatic event. During routine debriefing, the worker is given the opportunity to express feelings, explore the high and low points of work, express concerns, put more closure on unresolved areas, and get a better perspective on the overall experience. The interviewer's role is to listen and help clarify, being careful to make sure the worker addresses all the relevant aspects of his/her work. Debriefing does not involve counseling or performance evaluation. Keep these separate.

I. General

What were a few rewarding aspects of your time there? Why?

What were a few disappointing aspects of your time there? What could have prevented these or encouraged you more?

II. Work

Summarize your job responsibilities while there.

Was your job challenging and rewarding to you? Explain.

How were you able to exercise your gifts and abilities?

Are you satisfied with your contribution to your work/team?

How was your health? How did it affect your work?

How was your financial support level?

III. Language/Culture

What aspects of the culture did you enjoy the most? Why?
What aspects of the culture were the hardest for you (practices, beliefs, values)?
What was language learning like for you? Any suggestions for improvement?
Describe the relationships you were able to develop with nationals in the country.
How did the cultural and language adjustment affect your:
self concept; marriage/person with whom you live/work partner; parenting; relationship with your teammates; relationship with your team/work leader

IV. Personal

What have you learned the most about yourself during your time there?
Have you seen or developed any new strengths?
Are you aware of any weaknesses that surfaced?

V. Spiritual

- In what ways have you grown spiritually--what have you learned, and how was your relationship with God?

VI. Closing

- What are your plans for furlough/returning to your home?
- How could your sponsoring agency encourage or support you during this time?
- Is there anything about your next assignment that you would like to discuss?
- Is there anything else that you want to share about your time?
- Do you have any other comments or recommendations for the sponsoring organization? (Close by expressing gratitude for their work and who they are. Affirm them and their contributions.)

VII. Interviewers Comments and Recommendations

Note-- This is a generic form that was developed by the organization *Frontiers*. We have adapted it and others may too. Used by permission.

Priority Time for Busy Couples

Priority time is a commitment made by a husband and wife to one another to spend a minimum of two hours a week specifically sharing their lives together. The demands of missions sometimes places extra pressures on marriage relationships. This means we need to give the relationship special attention. Many couples find that unless they commit themselves to have a pre-arranged time of meeting together, communication gets neglected within the marriage and their relationship declines. The time needs to be scheduled to avoid interruption: e.g., at a time when children are asleep or at school .it should be planned together to fit in with each other's schedules.

Some Suggestions for What You Could Do During Priority Time

Read together and discuss a book about marriage or family.

Go out for a walk, or go out for coffee and cake or a meal Relax together.

Ask each other, "What pressures do you feel you have been under recently?" Pray for each other. Don't counsel each other. Listen closely and pray!

Pray for one another's service for the Lord .Try to help each other identify your respective spiritual gifts and talents. Discuss how you can help one another be more effective in your service for the lord.

Discuss and pray about your financial needs and your giving to others.

Discuss the needs of your children. Pray for them: for character growth, for their relationship with the Lord, for their relationship with their friends ,for their school activities, etc.

Ask each other the question: "Have I hurt you by anything I've said or done recently?" Resolve any of these hurts that may have occurred by asking for forgiveness and forgiving one another.

Each write down what you think your partner's main character strengths are, then share them with each other. Encourage one another.

Each write down what you think are your own personal character weaknesses. Ask your partner to pray for God to strengthen you in these areas of weakness

Play a game together.

Application

Set time aside to discuss the above suggestions with your marriage partner. Decide on a time when you could meet regularly and begin to do some of the things suggested.

Get together with the married couples on your team or in your area. Encourage each other to share some of the pressures that you feel in your marriage relationships. Help each other by sharing how you have handled these pressures.

Notes: This material is from Barry Austin's (1995) resource manual, *Personnel Development and pastoral Care for YWAM Staff*. Used by permission. We have found that partnering with another couple for mutual growth and accountability is key to make sure that priority times are successful.

We also like to encourage couples to start out their priority time with a tool developed by the Mac-es (1977) in *How to Have A Happy Marriage*, which looks at how much marital potential a couple thinks they have already developed. Each of the items below are scored on a scale from 1--10. The higher the score, the more potential is felt to have been fulfilled. It is the marriage that is being scored, not the individuals. This is done individually and then shared/compared with each other. A good discussion then usually ensues. Additional items can be added that are relevant to your situation.

Common goals and values; communication skills; effective ways of handling conflict; commitment to growth of our relationship; expressions of appreciation and affection; cooperation; agreement on gender roles; sexual fulfillment; money management; time management; decision-making; interaction with children; interaction with extended family; issues of health--exercise, nutrition etc.; involvement with work or leisure activities; spiritual growth

Family Scenarios:

Read through the three fictitious scenarios below. Respond to the question at the end of each scenario. What might your responses be if you were a mission leader, a member care consultant, or a close friend?

Scenario One

An Asian family is having trouble dealing with stress while going through the orientation program of its agency. The program takes place in a North African country, and requires that the participants move to a new city every two to four weeks over a three-month period. The parents are concerned that they have been moving around too much, both pre-field and now during orientation, and that their two children are suffering as a consequence. The oldest is an eight-year old girl who has started wetting the bed three times a week at night, and the youngest is a boy, aged two, who is not eating very much food.

- What could be done to help this family?

Scenario Two

A five-year old boy from Europe does not want to go to his Portuguese-speaking primary school in Luanda, Angola, which he has been attending for two months. He is in pre-school and complains that some of the kids make fun of him by sticking out their tongues at him and saying that his drawings are ugly. During the last month the boy often whines and complains as he rises to get ready for school.

When he returns from school he is often hard to make contact with and acts mean towards other family members.

- How would you help this boy?

Scenario Three

A couple with no children is having marital problems. They have been working on a team as agricultural tentmakers among a Central Asian group for the past five years. The husband is Nigerian and the wife is from the Ivory Coast. The work is doing well but the long hours needed to travel and provide assistance has affected their relationship. Or so they say it has. Both acknowledge that they have come from difficult family backgrounds, in which there was alcoholism, some spiritistic practices, and poor parental modeling of conflict resolution. They have seen a counselor when back in the Ivory Coast on furlough and attended a marriage retreat on the field, but no lasting changes have occurred. The wife's relationships with the local women are significant, and she is having a significant impact in their lives. The husband has few close relationships outside of his work and is wondering if he is going through a mid-life crisis. The agency decides to let them continue on the field and to do the best they can until they can get some more help somewhere.

- How would you try to help this couple?
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Career Consultation Cases

These two fictitious cases look at some of the personal, work, and career issues facing cross-cultural workers. Read through the cases, and respond to the questions below. You are the member care consultant!

The Case of Fred and Betty

Fred is 30 years old, married to Betty, and they have two kids--Sam, age 6, and Mary, age 4. They are Canadians. One year ago they moved to an Asian country to provide some needed services to the people there. Fred was able to get a job as an English teacher at a university, teaching eight hours of class per week. Previously he was an insurance sales person. He has about 12 hours worth of preparation each week to do (correcting papers, lesson planning, clerical things). Betty home schools the oldest and basically is a house mom.

The climate is extreme--very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. So some of the family's usual outdoor activities--like walking together--are limited. They live in a two-bedroom apartment in a city of 100,000 people.

Fred and Betty study the local language each week, and like practicing it with neighbors and in the market. They are not able to engage in much discussion yet due to their language limitations. They are on e-mail. Their financial support is adequate (they have a sponsoring agency to help support them), and they have no significant culture shock, although they miss friends and relatives.

They are part of an expatriate group of ten that meets together for mutual support. They get along with the coordinator and other members. Twice a month they get together for a two-hour meeting (to discuss adjustment issues and exchange stories and advice). Fred enjoys helping to coordinate part of the discussion times.

Betty likes being a mom, and is basically content in the new country (her first extended time overseas). Fred, though, is becoming restless, as he would really like to be doing more outside things in the host community (meeting people, talking about important matters of concern to the local people) and less time teaching English. Teaching English to internationals would probably be Fred's 20th job choice back in Canada. Fred is on a two-year contract, and it would not be possible to change jobs.

Fred sends an email message to you--you are his member care consultant--asking for your advice.

Consider these questions in your response:

- What issues are present--what is really going on in this case?
- What materials and interventions would help?
- What additional information is needed?
- Are there any ethical, family or organizational issues? If so, discuss these.
- How is this case similar to other situations of which you are aware?

The Case of Theresa Worker

Dear Member Care Consultant,

I am writing to see if you could help me with some of my job-related struggles. My name is Theresa Worker and for the past several months I have been disenchanted with my work. I would appreciate any advice and suggestions you could give me. Thanks.

Let me first give you a bit of my background and then ask you some questions. Here goes. I have worked in an international aid agency for five years. During this time I have worked in three different settings: helped administer two training schools, did secretarial work, and participated on a three-month relief team. I am single, Australian, aged 26, female, and am presently working at one of the agency offices in Europe while I try to sort out what I want to do. I completed two years of university prior to joining the company and am also fairly fluent in German. Do you need any additional information about me? Please let me know. Now for my questions:

- How do I know if I am effectively doing what cross-cultural and humanitarian workers do?
- How do I assess my strengths/weaknesses as a worker when I have worked in different settings and transitioned so much over the last five years?
- How can I set goals for the future to be more effective?
- How do I know the type of job in which I can work best?
- Do other people go through this type of frustrating experience?

In the past I think I have been too flexible with regards to my work preferences within our company--that is, I have often worked in jobs because no one else was available to do them and I felt it was right to just try to fill in. I would really appreciate your help as I try to assess my capabilities and involvement in this work.

Sincerely yours, Theresa Worker

Crisis Intervention and Contingency Management

Workers who serve in cross-cultural settings are often subject to a variety of extreme stressors. Natural disasters, wars, sudden relocation, imprisonment, and sickness are but a few of the examples. Agencies that send their people into potentially adverse situations have an ethical responsibility to do all they can to prepare and support them. Here are four steps to help organizations better prepare for and manage crisis situations. Note that each step involves three levels of responsibility--individual, organizational, and outside consultants--and that the steps overlap. Use these steps as a grid--like a checklist--to consider your team/organization's readiness to handle adverse situations.

Step 1--Preparation

• *Contingency plans*--for individuals, families, teams, agencies, regions

Risk assessment and management--monitoring at-risk zones

Forming plans--hostage situations, natural disasters, evacuation, assault, moral failure

Estate planning--writing a will, organizing and safeguarding important documents, etc.

• *Stress training*--to develop coping skills via *in vivo* experiences (e.g., firearms, emergency rooms at hospitals) and simulation exercises, case studies, teaching, personal examples/reflections

• *Prefield and field orientation*--security guidelines, do's and don'ts, adjustment helps

Step 2--Staying Alive

- *Using survival skills to stay alive, healthy, and sane*--to manage oneself, resources, and relationships
- Crisis management teams*--to monitor and make decisions during the crisis
- Human rights advocacy*--to use moral, legal, and political pressure

Step 3--Crisis Intervention

- Practical help to stabilize/protect*--ensure safety, and provide food, shelter, money
- Critical incident stress debriefing*--express thoughts and feelings related to the crisis
- Brief supportive counseling*--as needed for those affected by the critical incident(s)

Step 4--Aftercare

- Therapy/counseling*--help with anxiety/PTSD and other adjustment problems
- Organizational review*--evaluate the causes, interventions, results/lessons of the crisis
- Follow-up*--contact those affected, implement suggested changes

How To Use This Grid

- Discuss this grid within your setting--team, organization, etc.. Then read through and discuss some key articles on crisis and contingency management within your respective agencies and settings. (See chapter 44 for references.)
 - Take time to identify the types of crises your people are likely to face; identify some acceptable approaches to handling crises, providing care, and follow-up; and identify available resources to help.
 - Review one or two crisis situations you have already had, discussing what was done well, what could have been done better, and the implications of this past experience for future situations.
 - As a group exercise, interact on the "crisis intervention" scenarios at the end of Stephen Goode's article "Guidelines for Crisis and Contingency Management", *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, volume 12, pp. 211-216.
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Reentry Preparation

Returning to your home country can be an exciting and enriching experience! Whether your return is for a brief period of time, such as for furlough, or possibly permanently, adequate preparation is needed to get the most out of your life back home.

Preparation requires taking a close look at four areas: 1) who you are as a person, 2) how you and your home culture may have changed, 3) your plans and goals when you are at home, and 4) your strategies for adjustment.

The reentry process can be a bit like culture shock, in that you are called to meet basic needs in different and sometimes unfamiliar ways. Much of the stress experienced is brought on by returning to a setting--which includes family, friends, and work--that is presumed to be familiar to the individual. Often it is the unexpected nature and the subtlety of these changes that creates the greatest amount of stress.

In short, your way of thinking and doing things has changed. Sometimes it takes readjusting to your home culture to shed light on the nature of these changes.

Some common struggles during reentry include feeling disoriented and out of place, disillusionment, irritation with others and certain aspects of the culture, feelings of loneliness or isolation, and depression. On the other hand, reentry can be a very positive experience, with minimal adjustment struggles. So do not let this list of struggles overwhelm you. Just be aware of them and prepare!

As you make preparations to return to your home country, we encourage you to reflect on a promise: "I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake nor let you down. Assuredly not!" (Hebrews 13:15, Amplified).

Reentry Assessment

Several factors typically influence the adjustment process of workers returning to their home country. These factors involve your relationship with both the host culture and your original home culture, as well as some of your individual characteristics.

Respond to each of the 15 items on this worksheet to help you explore what reentry might be like for you. You might also want to do this exercise with/for other family members.

Host Country

- How long have you been away from your home country? Where have you lived since then?
- 2. In what ways have you identified with the host culture? (Language, customs, values, beliefs, dress, etc.)
- 3. In what ways are the host culture and your home country similar and dissimilar? (climate, geography, language, religion, standard of living, politics, customs, etc.)
- 4. How fulfilled do you feel in your work and overall experience? What has it been like for you?
- 5. What do you think it will be like to be away from the host culture? (saying goodbye to friends and places, stopping work)

Worker Characteristics

- 6. Describe your physical health, including stamina, nutrition, eating habits, medical problems, stress levels, and exercise.
- 7. Identify a few personal qualities that may help or hinder your adjustment back home. Discuss these with a trusted friend.
- 8. Have you or a friend noticed any important changes in how you think or behave since living in the host culture? List them.
- 9. Describe other transitions that you or a family member are going through (recent marriage, child birth, children leaving home, entering mid-life or retirement, deaths)
- 10. How have you practically prepared for your return to your country of origin?

Home Culture

- 11. How long will you be staying in your country of origin? List a few things that you think have changed for your family, friends, and home country. How might these impact you?
- 12. Describe the primary purposes/expectations for your return.
- 13. What have any previous reentry experiences been like? How can these past experiences help your upcoming reentry time?
- 14. To what extent have you stayed updated on events and changes back home? (via reading, news, letters, phone calls, email, etc.).
- 15. Describe the type of support groups you have back home for you (family, friends, work). How could they help you? With whom could you comfortably discuss your reentry experience?

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