

# Rotary International District 5450



## Information Book For *Inbound Students*

*Revised 2025*

## Objectives of the RMRYE Program

- To further international goodwill and understanding by enabling students to study firsthand some of the problems and accomplishments of people in lands other than their own.
- To enable students to advance their education by studying for a year in an environment entirely different from their own and undertaking the study of courses and subjects not normally available to them in their own country.
- To give students opportunities to broaden their outlook by learning to live with and meet people of different cultures, creeds, and colors and by having to cope with day-to-day problems in an environment completely different from the one they have experienced at home.
- To have students act as ambassadors for their own country by addressing Rotary Clubs, community organizations and youth groups in their host country; by imparting as much knowledge as they can of their own country, its attributes and its problems to the people they meet during their year abroad.
- To provide sufficient time to study and observe another country's culture so that upon returning home students can pass on the knowledge they have gained by addressing Rotary clubs and other organizations and assimilate the positive aspects into their everyday living.

## BEING AN EXCHANGE STUDENT

- Is fantastic
- Is meeting hundreds of wonderful people
- Is giving speeches and writing letters
- Is getting fat and at times being poor?
- Is seeing a new country and experiencing new things
- Is being homesick and at times, miserable
- Is getting tired
- Is being an ambassador
- Is personal growth

## THE SUCCESSFUL EXCHANGE STUDENT

- is flexible and adaptable
- wants to learn and have new experiences
- is knowledgeable and well read
- is open to challenge and change
- is sensitive, loyal and trustworthy
- is involved
- recognizes "Different" from good, bad, wrong, etc.
- communicates with family, Rotary, school, friends
- is introspective... spends considerable time examining his own thoughts and feelings. The Latin word introspicere means to look inside and that is what an introspective person does, metaphorically speaking.

## ***What is Rotary and District 5450?***

### **Rotary International is a worldwide service organization**

- 1.2 million Rotarians in 168 different countries and geographic regions
- 30,000+ Local Rotary Clubs
- Rotarians are members of a specific Rotary Club
- Local Rotary Clubs are part of a regional or geographic District for leadership and support
- Each District elects a District Governor and other Officers, and organizes District Committees -- We are District 5450 representing 60+ Rotary Clubs in north central Colorado

### **Rotary Youth Exchange is a District Program**

- The YE Program is the responsibility of the District Governor
- District Governor appoints the District Youth Exchange Committee to carry out program
- Committee Members have the responsibility to coordinate the exchange between your Sponsoring District and our District 5450 as Hosting District
- Inbound Exchange Students agree to abide by the rules established by the Hosting District
- The Hosting District is responsible for the orientation and care of Inbound Exchange students, and may terminate the Exchange, returning the Student home, for failure to comply with our rules or having unacceptable conduct

### **Local Rotary Clubs Host the District's Inbound Exchange Students and**

- Appoint a Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) to arrange for host families and register Inbound Students for school
- Appoint a Club Counselor to assist Inbound Exchange Students with day-to-day matters
- Provide Inbound Exchange Students with a spending allowance
- Invite Inbound Exchange Students to participate in Rotary Club meetings and activities

### **Rotary Counselors**

**You have three Counselors: your Youth Exchange Committee District Country Contact, your Club Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) and your Club Counselor from your Host Rotary Club**

#### **Your Club Youth Exchange Officer**

- Is a member of your Host Rotary Club **and may or may not be the same gender as you are**
- Lives and/or works in the community where you are living
- Will help you and/or your Host Family with school registration
- Should be advised if you have problems with school, family, finances or other matters
- Should have verified you have access to funds in the event of an emergency
- Is the Rotarian who must know where you are when traveling (see Appendix C, Travel Policy for District 5450 Inbound Exchange Students)

#### **Your Club Counselor**

- Is a member of your Host Rotary Club **and is the same gender as you are**
- Lives and/or works in the community where you are living
- Should meet with you regularly
- Should be advised if you have problems with school, family, finances, and all other matters
- Should be considered your ADVOCATE – someone you can look to for support and friendship, as well as help solving problems

#### **Your District Country Contact**

- Is likely, not a member of your hosting Rotary club.
- Was likely, in contact with you during your placement process.
- Is a person to turn to for help solving problems not solved within your host family or by your host club YEO or club counselor.
- Should be in contact with you once a month during your year here in District 5450.
- Is the person to whom you **MUST** report a change of address when you change host families.

### **Members of the District 5450 Youth Exchange Committee**

Corresponded with you before your arrival here and may have met you at the airport upon arrival

- May not live near your Host Rotary Club's community
- Are always available to you, your Host Family, and your Club Counselor to help solve problems
- Expect to receive from your monthly reports filled out on our website [www.RMRYE.org](http://www.RMRYE.org)
- Want to hear from you on a regular basis to know how you are, and especially when there are problems that you cannot resolve with your Club Counselor or Host Family
- Expect to receive an Address Update form from you when you change Host Families. Again, you will find this form on our web site at [www.RMRYE.org](http://www.RMRYE.org)
- Must be informed in advance when you intend to travel outside of our District or will be away from your Host Family's home for more than 24 hours (See Appendix C for Travel Policy).
- Must be informed in advance of plans for any visits from family from home
- Must be informed of your departure plans at the conclusion of your exchange year
- Will consider your side of any issue or problem that could affect your exchange, and will recommend action to the Youth Exchange Committee based on **the Rotary 4-Way Test:**
  - Is it the Truth?
  - Is it fair to all concerned?
  - Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
  - Will it be beneficial to all concerned

## Departure for Home

Departure must occur prior to the expiration of your US visa. Your visa is valid for 364 days beginning the day you arrive in the US. You must leave at least one day before your visa expires and you must give your Country Contact all of your travel information prior to departure. You must plan your return With your Host Family. If you are not going on the bus trip your return flight home must be within 7 days after the last day of your school year. If you go on the bus trip your return flight home must be within 7 days after the end of the bus trip.

## School Requirements

**You are a Youth Exchange Student; school is part of the exchange program, and school attendance is a requirement**

- Take a course load and classes reasonable for your age and previous education.
- Strive for success in school: complete homework assignments and participate in class.
- Seek help from teachers and school staff, Host Parents, and Club Counselor if having difficulty with schoolwork before the problems become too great to manage.
- Exchange Students who do not meet minimum passing requirements for courses may be returned home.
- US schools offer many activities other than academics; take advantage of these opportunities.
- Daily school attendance is a requirement in Colorado; schools routinely contact parents or guardians of students who are absent -- Host Parent must approve any absence from school
- School has authority to expel a student for inappropriate behavior and excessive absence; an expelled Exchange Student no longer qualifies for a student visa and will be returned home
- Hosting Schools make their own decisions about letting exchange students graduate. Not all school in the district are the same.
- Your school back home has sole authority on granting credit for course work completed in the US.
- Your behavior and attitude in school will affect the school's willingness to accept future exchange students.
- There is no cost to you for school classes or textbooks, and in some cases your Hosting Club will pay for your supplies, sports uniforms, etc...
- You may not miss more than **10 days of school** for non-Rotary related travel 2 days are taken by Rotary for the Friday Ski weekend and Spring Meeting

### Interscholastic Sports

- Sports are an important part of the American High School "culture" for both boys and girls
- Most schools offer team sports for boys and girls in three "seasons": Fall, Winter, and Spring.
- Varsity and Junior Varsity sports compete against teams from other schools; intramural sports match teams from the same school on a less competitive basis.
- Exchange Students are generally eligible to play on Varsity or Junior Varsity teams if they have not completed 12 years of school and/or have not received a certificate from their High School.
- Even if you are not age-eligible to play on a team, ask the coach if you can practice with the team for the exercise and relationships you will build with team members.

- Support your school's sports teams by attending games and cheering them on.

## Learning and Speaking English

If English is not your native language, the success of your exchange year will depend on your willingness to make English your language this year!

- Most Americans - your Host Families, your school mates, and your new friends - do not speak or understand the language of your home country.
- To be accepted in your host community, you must be able to communicate in our language.
- Get help learning English if necessary: teachers, special tutors, Club Counselor, Host Parents.
- Ask people to repeat or reword a statement if you do not understand; simply nodding your head does not indicate lack of understanding.
- Avoid making friends only with other Exchange Students who speak your native language or US kids who want to improve their skills with Spanish, French, German, etc.
- Most Americans consider it rude behavior if you and others converse in your native language in the presence of others who do not understand that language.
- Practice your understanding and word comprehension by reading newspapers, listening to "talk" radio stations or having the subtitles added to television.
- Practice your pronunciation skills by reading out loud to a friend or Host Parent and ask them to correct errors.
- Don't become discouraged with language mistakes you make -- learning any language takes time and patience.
- Check your mobile phone for translator and language apps and ask others to use them.

## Travel - A Privilege Not a Right

You are in the US with a Student Visa, not a Tourist Visa; while you will have opportunities to travel and see much of the United States, the rules and conditions you agreed to comply with state that all travel will be acceptable to the District Youth Exchange Committee, your Host Rotary Club, and your Host Parents.

- Travel of any type, distance, and duration must be approved by Host Parents in advance
- Do not tell them what you are doing -- ask them if your plans are acceptable
- Rotary must be informed of where you can be reached at all times in the event of an emergency
- Access to public transportation may be more limited (and expensive) than you are accustomed to; do not make your transportation desires a burden to your Host Parents.
- Remember that you may not miss more than 10 days of school for travel. These days cannot be consecutive or added to an extended school break, such as Spring Break week.
- Make certain that you understand and comply with District 5450's Travel Policy.

## American Culture

**The "America" you may have seen portrayed in movies and TV shows may not be like the culture you will experience in the community hosting you.**

- You will likely find that the clothes people wear, the words they use, and the family values they live by are different than the "Hollywood World" you've seen
- There are even major differences in what is "acceptable" and "not acceptable" in small village communities compared to larger cities and suburbs within our District
- Observe and selectively adopt the behavior of those around you in specific circumstances -- language and mannerisms acceptable with school friends may not be acceptable in your Host home
- Respect and "polite manners" are always appropriate and acceptable in the presence of adults
- Recognize that there are cultural differences between the US and your home; these are not "**better**" or "**worse**," only "**different**"
- Share with friends and family parts of your cultural background; explain to them what you do
- Ask your friends and family about the cultural differences you observe
- Read the article How to Cope with Culture Shock in Appendix E

## Host Families

**Your Host Families (perhaps two, three, or four different families during your exchange year) have agreed to make you a part of their family during your stay.**

- Host Parents are your legal guardians, and are responsible for you as delegated by the District Youth Exchange Committee through your Host Rotary Club
- Host Parents are Surrogate Parents **and have the power to say “no”**; you must earn their confidence before expecting flexibility or “freedom” to do things without express approval.
- You will learn about our culture and our values through your Host Family; through your actions and behavior, they will learn about you, your family, and your country.
- ***You must adapt your habits and behavior to fit with your Host Family.***
- Recognize that your Host Parents may have a different financial situation than your own family.
- Be open and honest with your Host Family; if something is bothering you, discuss it.
- Be a part of the Family; participate in family activities even if they do not interest you.
- Be willing to try new foods, activities.
- Take an active part in household tasks and ask what you can do to help.
- Understand that parental roles (Mother vs. Father) may be less distinct than in your country.
- Recognize that Host brothers or sisters may be jealous of the attention they must share with you; find common interests with host siblings, regardless of their age, and find reasons for them to be your friend.
- Respect the property and privacy of all family members; avoid getting involved in “family matters”.
- Treat all “family matters” as confidential; do not discuss family matters outside the family (“gossip”).

### Questions for the “First Night”

Appendix D lists a number of common concerns that Host Families and Exchange Students often have about living with each other. We provide this list to both you and Host Parents to help clarify everyone's expectations and avoid misunderstandings. Since your “first night” with this Host Family may have taken place a few weeks ago, you should now be able to provide an answer to each of these questions, and it will hopefully be the same answer your Host Family would give. If you are not certain, discuss those items with your Host Parents when you return home from this Orientation Weekend.

The answer to each question that will be provided by your other Host Parents may be different from those of your current Host Parents, so these discussions should take place soon after you move on to each new family. And by the time you return to your “real” home next year, you may be so much different than the person who left there, you should go over these questions with your own parents!

## Financial Matters

In the same way Host Families may have a financial condition different from your parents, Exchange Students have varying financial resources and abilities to manage those resources.

- You are expected to have sufficient funds, including the spending allowance provided by your Host Rotary Club, to pay for your personal expenses
- Host Parents are asked to provide you with housing and food and include you in family travel and entertainment as they would for any of their children
- You are expected to “pay your own way” for meals and entertainment when with friends or classmates
- You must “budget” your expenditures (clothing, entertainment, travel, etc.) to meet the capabilities of your own resource
- Avoid “extravagant” spending habits compared to your friends and classmates, even when you can “afford” the expenditures
- Discuss finances, money “value”, and costs with your Host Parents; they should know how much money you have available for spending and how you have access to it (banking, ATM card, etc.)
- If you do not receive the monthly spending allowance from your Host Rotary Club on a regular, timely basis, speak with your Club Counselor
- Be responsible for expenditures made on your behalf by your Host Parents (postage, telephone bills, purchases made by them at your request, etc.) and pay your debts quickly
- Avoid borrowing money from others; likewise, avoid lending money unless you are willing to make it a gift
- Should an emergency arise, the student needs to have access to an emergency fund. This can be a bank account with a minimum of \$500 set up upon arrival in the US or a credit card that the student brings with him/her to use in

a crisis. Either way, the money needs to come from the students' natural parents. This money is not to be used as additional allowance for prom, movies, or other things that the student did not budget for!

## The “4-Ds” And an “S” and an “A” for... “Ambassador”

### DRINKING

Underage drinking is a significant problem in our society, and we are not so naive to think you will not be exposed to situations where alcohol is present. But remember -- you have a lot more at risk than your US friends if the police appear.

- The laws of the State of Colorado prohibit possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by anyone under the age of 21
- A condition of the exchange program is full compliance with the laws of the Host Country -- this one included
- State law prohibits the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors by restaurants or other licensed establishments, even when ordered/paid for by someone over age 21; the establishment, person ordering the drink, and person consuming the drink are all breaking the law. Do not put someone in this situation by asking for, or accepting, an alcoholic beverage in public locations
- An Exchange Student may accept an alcoholic beverage if offered by an adult who is hosting the student in his or her private home--but do not feel obligated to accept the offer!

### DRUGS

- Possession or consumption of drugs, including marijuana, or any illegal substance is expressly prohibited.
- Any Exchange Student found in violation of this rule will be immediately returned home (contingent upon release by legal authorities)--**NO SECOND CHANCES**
- Rotary will not provide legal representation to defend an Exchange Student charged with a violation of State or Federal drug laws - defense lawyers are expensive
- If you are in a car or room where drugs are present or being used by others -- get out!
- Legally prescribed controlled medications must be identified on your application if brought from home country, or prescribed by a US physician -- if in doubt, ask. They must also be in the containers you received them in from your physician/pharmacist.

### DRIVING

- Exchange Students are NOT permitted to drive any type of motorized vehicle. This includes boats, jet skis, airplanes, ATV's snowmobiles and motorized scooters in addition to others.
- This is a condition of the Exchange Program and a condition of the Medical/Accidental Injury Medical Insurance.  
**Exchange Students are NOT permitted to take Driver Education in school - DO NOT EVEN ASK.**

**Body Disfigurement** No Additional Tattoos or Body Piercings – If you don't already have tattoos or piercings, you MAY NOT obtain them while on exchange.

### THE BIG “S” -- SMOKING

- Smoking may be less acceptable here than in your home country. Vendors may not sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21, including cigarettes, cigars, or e-cigarettes.
- Smoking is prohibited on public school grounds in Colorado (not just inside the building)
- Smoking is prohibited or restricted in most public buildings, restaurants, stores, etc.
- Smoking may associate you with the “wrong crowd” in school, even if those kids are not like you
- If not stated on your Rotary Application, may have been a factor in your selection by Host Families
- If so, stated on Application, permitted only where and when acceptable to Host Family
- Absolutely forbidden in the bedroom assigned to you by the Host Family
- If thinking about smoking, think more about the health consequences

### AND FINALLY

These are not the only ways to get sent home. If you do not try to be a good exchange student, such as staying in your room all the time, not making friends, breaking your host family's rules, being rude, etc... In other words, **if you are not a good ambassador your hosting club can decide to send you home.** Please know that **this does not happen often, and it does not happen easily.**

## Contacts with Home

When you applied to be an Exchange Student, you agreed to be an active participant in your host community, not just a visitor. This requires your total immersion here, and frequent contact with “home” can delay or even prevent this.

This does not mean you should ignore or abandon your family and friends back home, just keep things in balance.

- Exchange Students who put too much time and effort into communicating “back home” everything that is happening here find themselves becoming observers or “reporters”, not participants in the culture they came to learn about.
- Occasional (every few weeks) chats or calls with your parents will let them see your new world through your eyes. Consider writing old-fashioned letters home – these will become cherished keepsakes for you and your parents.
- Avoid “I’m homesick and want to come home” communications. The distance involved makes your homesickness a “here” problem, your parents cannot really assist and it will cause them concerns. Talk to your host family or your counselor about the issues – they are “here” and can help quicker.
- Telephone calls and video chats should be limited, and kept brief. Consider sending an email with more details
- Introduce your Host Family to your family back home!
- E-mail or SMS are effective ways to communicate brief urgent information (“I need money” or “I received your package with Christmas gifts”)
- Please show respect for your Host Family if they ask you to spend less time in your phone. They want to spend time with you.
- Social Media can be a useful tool to keep in touch with your new friends here and old friends back home. Avoid the tendency to compare your experiences with other exchange students – everyone is different, every exchange unique. You may not be traveling a lot compared to others, but that might change. Remember, everyone curates their social media posts to show their best experiences – no one’s exchange is perfect, we each face problems we don’t share publicly – use common sense when posting and consuming!

## Visits from Home

A visit by your parents and siblings during the last few months of your exchange year is a great opportunity for them to see what you have been experiencing and meet all of your Host Families and new friends, and for you to display your knowledge of our country, culture, and language.

- Family visits should take place no earlier than the final three months of your exchange year
- Family visits should not conclude with your scheduled return home
- Family visits should not be planned during the Christmas Holiday period.
- Family visits should not be planned that will involve lengthy absences from school for you or impose a burden on Host Families.
- Remember you may not miss more than 10 days of school during the school year. Some of these days are already taken by the Rotary Ski trip and the Spring meeting.
- Any planned visit from home must be discussed with, and be acceptable to, the current Host Family, and club YEO and the District Overall Chair; Surprise visits are not acceptable
- Visits by friends or distant relatives are not allowed, and permission for travel as part of such visits will be denied.

## Relationships (the 4<sup>th</sup>-D)

## DATING

**You will benefit the most from your year here by making as many friends as possible, both male and female.**

- Avoid serious romantic relationships; you will have to go home at the end of your year and this will make departure even more difficult
- Avoid including only other exchange students in your circle of friends; while you have much in common, you can learn more about America from Americans
- If you left a “serious” boyfriend or girlfriend back home, recognize that you will both change a lot in a year
- Putting that relationship “on hold” during your exchange year will allow you to focus on where you are, not where they are
- Seek input from your Host Family, teachers, and other adults on the character of individuals you would like to be friendly with, and include their advice with your own observations



## Homesickness

**Most Exchange Students will experience this feeling sometime during the exchange year.** Know that an emotional “roller coaster” is normal - expect highs and lows.

- What feelings to look for: desire to be by yourself; losing control of your emotions; just feeling “lousy”
- What to do about it: get and stay busy; talk about your feelings (teacher, Host Parent, others); write a letter home on paper and put it under your pillow--not in the mailbox!
- What not to do about it: ignore your feelings; try eating your way to happiness; call home.

## Behavior/Manners

**Good/bad manners and “acceptable” behavior are not necessarily universally defined; what is/is not acceptable in your country may not be the same in US.**

- “Please” and “Thank you” are important and powerful words
- You may have had more (or less) freedom to do as you wished at home compared to the requirements of your Host Parents; understand and follow the requirements here and now
- Showing respect will earn you respect
- Your good behavior and positive attitude will benefit future Exchange Students; schools, Rotary clubs, and Families will want to host students like you in the future

## Internet and Cell Phone Use

- If you are using your host family’s computer, please discuss computer use with them.
- Using either home or school computers to view inappropriate material on the Internet, or sharing inappropriate material to or from others, is strictly forbidden.
- Regarding your cell phone - remember that you are responsible for the charges. You are also responsible for the content accessed on your phone, practice common sense!

## Medical/Accident Insurance

**This information applies only to the insurance policy offered through District 5450 Youth Exchange.**

- Insurance provides payment or reimbursement for emergency and urgent medical treatment due to illness or injury
- Insurance will the medical cost if “in network” providers are used.
- The Exchange Student/parents -- not the Host Parents or Host Rotary Club -- are responsible for all medical expenses - whether or not covered by the insurance
- See Appendix G For instruction on filing an insurance claim
- For assistance, ask a Host Parent, Club Counselor, or Country Contact “Doctor’s Advice” About Health Problems

**Physical illness often accompanies the emotional ups-and-downs Exchange Students experience. Knowing where to turn to when away from home and feeling ill can make things a lot easier to deal with.**

- Discuss medical conditions and symptoms with your Host Parents. Your Club Counselor and Country Contact can also often help
- Most high schools have nurses and other medical personnel on staff who understand medical problems faced by young people
- Many Rotary Clubs have medical professionals in their membership; but if your Club Counselor does not recommend a particular doctor, ask your Host Parent to recommend one
- Doctors cannot help you with medical problems unless you provide all relevant information to them; your confidence will be protected

## Communicating

**How you communicate with others is often more important than what you communicate.**

- Body language, eye contact, “private” space invasion, hand movement all have meaning; may be different from the meanings you learned at home
- A smile on your face can affect how your message is received by others
- Be proud of your home country when telling others about it; do not feel the need to apologize for the actions of your countryman, past or present

- Have one or two small photo albums with you when visiting others' homes to share pictures of your country, family, and friends
- Maps and brochures or booklets showing scenes from your country will help others learn about your country; take them with you and share them often
- The more you speak with others about your country, the more knowledgeable you will become, and the more comfortable you will be speaking in front of groups
- Accept every invitation to do something or go someplace that you can; do not decline invitations because the activity is not familiar to you or not your favorite - you may not get a second chance

## Showing Your Appreciation to Others

**There are many ways to express the thought "Thank you" besides saying the words.**

- Write short "thank you" notes to anyone who invites you out, takes you to a special event, gives you a gift, or shows you a kindness in any way
- Picture postcards from your home country are especially appreciated and appropriate; if you don't have some with you now, ask your parents to send you a dozen or so as soon as possible
- Postcards combine your personal thanks with a visual part of your country--and because the space for writing is limited, you don't need to write a whole lot!
- If you brought gifts from home for your Host Families, select an appropriate time to give the gift, and make it a special occasion for you and the Host Family
- Find out birth dates for members of your Host Families, and remember them with a card, and a call or visit if you've moved on by that date
- Gifts need not be expensive to be cherished by the recipient; hand-made items or unique items show you put some time, not just money, into your gift and will mean a lot more to them

## Monthly Reports to the District Committee

**You are required to provide monthly reports to the District Committee during your year here, so we have input from you on the success of your exchange.**

- Be "up front" with us - tell it like it is - we may be able to help
- If you are having difficulty with your Host Family, Club Counselor, or others, we will attempt to resolve the problem without violating your confidence
- If a problem is serious, don't wait until "report time" to alert us -- pick up the phone and call
- We can't help you if we don't know something is bothering you!
- The report form is on the website at [www.RMRYE.org](http://www.RMRYE.org).

## Get Yourself Involved

**You have control over how involved you become in the life of your community, including your Host Homes, school, sports, clubs, church, Rotary, and community activities; the sooner you fill your day with activity, the faster Homesickness will be a feeling of the past!**

- Become an integral member of your Host Family; don't wait to be asked to help with daily chores -- look for things to do, and then do them
- **Spend "quality time" evenings and weekends with the family, not in your room**
- In school, join a sports team, school club, band, try out for a part in the school plays; the more school activities you get involved in, the more friends you will have
- Ask to speak to language and social studies classes about your country and the exchange program
- Offer to speak to church and community groups about your country; if you have slides for a program, use them often to share the beauty of your country
- Seek out volunteer opportunities in your community (hospitals, nursing homes, senior citizen centers, elementary schools, etc.) and share some of your time; ask some Rotarians for ideas and people to contact

## Contact with Your Host Rotary Club

**The District Youth Exchange Committee has placed you with your Hosting Rotary Club partly because they asked to host a student this year and partly because previous Exchange Students have done well in that community.**

- Each Rotary club has its own "personality", which can change as membership changes

# Appendix A – What is Rotary?

## The History of Rotary

Rotary was born on February 23, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois, the world's first and most international service club. The founder of Rotary was attorney Paul P. Harris (1868-1947), who gathered with three others to discuss his idea of a group of businessmen from different professions getting together periodically to become better acquainted. They decided to limit membership to one representative of each profession and to rotate the meeting site among each member's place of business, to acquaint each other with their various vocations and to promote business. The rotation of meeting places is the source of the name "Rotary".

Club membership grew rapidly. The second Rotary Club was founded in San Francisco in 1908. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain, in 1912, Rotary became an international organization.

Since 1905, the ideas of Paul Harris and his friends have become ideals which have been accepted by people of practically all nationalities, and of many political and religious beliefs. Today there are Rotary Clubs in Austria and American Samoa, in Brazil and Brunei, in Italy and India, in Scotland and South Africa - in nearly 200 countries. The universal acceptance of Rotary principles has been so great that there are now more than 34,000 Rotary clubs, with a membership of over 1.22 million men and women.

## Rotary Motto and Themes

Rotary International has adopted as its motto, "**Service Above Self.**" Additionally, each year, the Rotary International President coins a theme for that Rotary year. Rotarians throughout the world quote the Four Way Test of the things we think, say or do:

- 1. Is it the TRUTH?**
- 2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?**
- 3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?**
- 4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?**

## The Rotary Foundation

In 1917, the Rotary Foundation was born. The Rotary Foundation is a philanthropic trust promoting further understanding and friendly relations between peoples of different nations. The Foundation sponsors the largest scholarship program in the world and is supported purely by voluntary contributions from Rotary Clubs and Rotarians. The Rotary Foundation has eight working programs and a budget of approximately \$45-\$50 million (US) each year. These programs include Ambassadorial Scholarships, Rotary Volunteers, The 3H program (for Health, Hunger and Humanity), Rotary Peace Conferences, World Community Service, Special Grants, and two others that you may encounter during your exchange: Group Study Exchange, and Polio-Plus.

## Rotary at the Local Level -- The Rotary Club

The "personality" of each Rotary club is a reflection of the community it serves and the membership of that club. Even within our own District, club size ranges from less than two dozen members to well over two hundred members. Rotary clubs meet weekly throughout the year; some for a breakfast meeting, others during lunch. Some Rotary club meetings are quiet and "serious", staying to a tight schedule so the members can return to work on time, while other club meetings are less formal and structured.

Exchange students often find that the Rotary club hosting them will be very different from the Rotary club sponsoring them, and both will be very different from other Rotary clubs they may have the opportunity to visit during their exchange year. But Rotarians around the world all share the common philosophy for Service to Others, and as an exchange student, they are there to help provide a successful exchange experience.

As with most organizations, Rotary clubs are lead by officers who are elected by members for one-year terms beginning on July 1, the beginning of the Rotary Year. The officers include the Club President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and/or President-Elect, and Directors. Rotary clubs participating in the Youth Exchange Program generally appoint a Youth Exchange Officer, or YEO, to oversee that program, and that Rotarian, or another member of the host Rotary club, will be designated as the exchange student's Club Counselor. This Rotarian serves as the primary liaison between the Rotary club, the exchange student and the host families. **Your Club Counselor MUST be the same gender as you are.**

# Appendix B – Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange

The following two pages contain the Program Rules and Conditions which all exchange students and their parents agreed to follow as part of the Application to the Exchange Program. These are the “universal” set of common-sense rules that all Rotary District Youth Exchange Programs expect the student to comply with as a condition of the Exchange.

## Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange

As a Youth Exchange Student sponsored by a Rotary Club and/or District, you must agree to the following rules and conditions of exchange. Please note that districts may edit this document or insert additional rules on the reverse side if needed to account for local conditions.

### Strict Rules and Conditions of Exchange — VIOLATIONS WILL RESULT IN STUDENT’S IMMEDIATE RETURN HOME.

1. **Obey the law of the Host Country- if found guilty of a violation of any law, students can expect no assistance from their sponsors or their native country. An offending student will be returned home as soon as they are released by authorities. Ignorance of the law is no defense, if in doubt, ASK.**
2. The student is not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs or cannabis/THC/CBD in any form. Medicine prescribed by a physician is allowed.
3. The student is not authorized to operate a motorized vehicle of any kind or participate in driver education programs. **If you have a Driver’s License from your home country, you must surrender it to your Country Contact upon arrival in the United States.**
4. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is expressly forbidden. If the host family offers a student an alcoholic drink, it is permissible to accept it under their supervision.
5. Stealing is prohibited, there are no exceptions.
6. Unauthorized travel is not allowed. Students must follow the travel rules of the Host District.
7. The student must be covered by a health and life insurance policy agreeable to the Hosting District.
8. The student must attend school regularly and make an honest attempt to succeed.
9. The student must abide by the rules and conditions of exchange of the hosting district provided to you by the District Youth Exchange Committee

### Common Sense Rules and Conditions of Exchange- Violation will Result in a District review and restrictions.

#### Severe/Consistent disregard for these rules will result in being sent home.

1. Smoking is Not Allowed. If you stated on your application, you do not smoke, you will be held to that position for the **entire** year. Your host family placement was based on your being a non-smoker. Under no circumstances will you smoke in your host family’s home
2. Become an integral part of the host family, assuming duties and responsibilities normal for a student your age and other children in the family. Respect your host family’s wishes
3. Learn the language of your host country. Your effort will be appreciated by your host family, your teachers, host Rotary club and others. It will go a long way in gaining acceptance in the school and community.
4. Attend Rotary- sponsored events and host family events. Show interest in host family and Rotary activities to which you are invited. Volunteer to get involved- don’t wait to be asked. Lack of interest imparts a negative attitude and may impact future exchanges.
5. Get involved in your school and community activities. Plan your recreation and spare time activities around your school and community friends. Do not spend all your time with the other exchange students.
6. Choose friends carefully. Ask for and heed the advice of host families, counselors and school personnel in choosing friends.
7. Do not borrow money. Pay any bills promptly.
8. Travel is permitted with host parents or for Rotary club or district functions authorized by the hosting Rotary Club or district with proper adult chaperones. All travel outside Colorado must be authorized by your natural parents, your host parents, your Host Club YEO, your District Country Contact and your Inbound Student Chair. Students may not travel alone or only with other students.
9. If you are offered an opportunity to go on a trip or to an event, make sure you understand any costs you must pay and your responsibilities before you go.
10. You must show proof of proper immunizations. See Page 4, question 5—Immunizations.
11. Students should have sufficient financial support to assure their well-being during the exchange year. Your hosting district requires an emergency fund for emergency situations and if used, this fund must be immediately replenished to the required balance by your natural parents. Any unused funds will be returned to the student at the end of the exchange year. These funds are not meant to cover day-to-day expenses.

12. Any costs related to a student's early return home or any other unusual costs (e.g., language tutoring, tours, etc.) shall be the responsibility of the student's natural parents/guardian.
13. Students must return home directly by a route mutually agreeable to the host district and student's parents/guardian.
14. You are under the authority of the hosting district while on exchange. Parents must not directly authorize any extra activity of their son/daughter. Host district authorities must authorize all activities during the exchange year. Relatives living in the US have NO authority over the student during the exchange year.
15. Visits by parents/guardians and siblings are strongly discouraged during the exchange year. Such visits must take place only with the permission of host family, host club and host district. These visits should occur only during the last quarter of the exchange year and only during school breaks. They shall not interfere with obligatory Rotary events (i.e., district conference).
16. Abstain from serious romantic relationships, sexual activity and promiscuity.

**Additional Program rules and Conditions for inbound Students to District 5450:**

1. Students must arrive with a complete round-trip airline ticket, including both domestic and international segments. The ticket must have an "Open" return.
2. Students must maintain an emergency fund of \$500 US to be deposited upon arrival with the host Rotary club Counselor or YEO. This fund is for emergencies only and if used must be immediately replenished by the student's parents/guardians.
3. All inbound students must purchase Health, life and Liability insurance from CISI-Bolduc prior to arrival. The specific plan is PLAN-B+. The coverage date should begin with the date of departure from home and terminate 364 days later.
4. Students must list on their application all dietary restrictions and medications regularly taken as well as any medical conditions requiring regular or periodic treatment (i.e., allergies). Failure to do so may result in cancellation or termination of the exchange. If a new medical condition develops after application has been made, student and/or his/her family must make the hosting district aware of such new condition. District 5450 reserves the right to cancel or terminate the exchange under such circumstances.
5. To help with the adaptation of the student, we ask that phone calls and/or time on computer communicating through e-mails, face-book and other social media be limited.
6. Students must attend school regularly and make good effort in classes. Students will attend the high school designated by the hosting Rotary club. Under no circumstances will the student be allowed to take Driver's Education or operate any motorized vehicle. Exceptions are go-carts at an amusement park, golf carts on a golf course and riding lawnmowers while mowing a lawn.
7. Independent travel is prohibited. Travel under the auspices of the school, the host parents or Rotarians is permitted. In state travel requires notification of the YEO and Country Contact. Out of state travel requires permission of the host parents, natural parents/guardians, host club YEO, Country Contact and Inbound Student Chair.
8. Visits from home country **friends** or from **boyfriend/girlfriend** will **not be allowed**. All visits must be cleared with the host club YEO and District Chairperson **and especially with the host family**. Students are not permitted to return home during the exchange year except under very special emergency situations.

*These are most of the Important Rules of your exchange, however we could not put EVERY RULE that pertains to your exchange in this book. Please use your common sense and remember to always be a DIPLOMAT representing the country you are from.*

*Your Host Family has their own set of rules that you must also follow.*

*Always R-E-S-P-E-C-T your host family and their rules.*

## **Appendix C – Travel Policy for Inbound Exchange Students**

This is a cultural and educational exchange, NOT a travel exchange. Exchange students should have no expectations of being a tourist. The Host Rotary club and Host Families are under no obligation to provide or permit it. However, some travel through the generosity of, and with, the Host club, individual Rotarians and Host Families is encouraged. Under no circumstances shall students make their own travel arrangements and then expect the Host club and Host Family to agree. Inbound Exchange students must comply with this policy, and Host Families are asked to enforce it. Violations of this policy may be grounds for terminating the Exchange and returning the student to his or her home country immediately. Travel while school is in session is allowed ONLY with special permission. Any travel during times of required Rotary events (orientation weekends) will not be allowed!

For a student to travel outside the state of Colorado, the student must:

- Complete the travel permission form online at [www.rmrye.org](http://www.rmrye.org)

Travel Permission Info and Instructions:

It is the student's responsibility to manage the process for their parents and host parents. If they are not signing, the student needs to follow up with their parents and host parents to see if there are any questions about the travel preventing them from approving the trip or if they missed the email.

To submit the form, the student (or the student and their host family) will need: all of the details of the trip, the school's counselor contact information and all of the email address for their families and their YEO.

The Chair will contact the school to ensure the student is in good standing. They may also contact the adults in charge of the trip with any additional questions.

The Chair will not sign the form until all other parties have signed the form.

The travel is not approved until the Chair has signed the travel form.

After everyone has signed the travel form, all parties will receive a copy by email automatically.

The District Chair will provide final approval and notify the student that they have authorization for travel.

For any travel within the State of Colorado (along weekend camping trip or going skiing for the weekend) you need to only inform your YEO and your Country Contact where you will be going and how you may be reached by phone.

You may NOT begin travel without final authorization from the overall chair. **DO NOT LEAVE BEFORE YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS!** Obtaining approvals can take time. Please allow up to 7 days for approvals to be completed after all signatures have been obtained.

The reason for these rules is simple. The Rotary District 5450 Youth Exchange Committee, Hosting Rotary Club and Host Parents are responsible for students while they are in this country. We must know where students can be reached in case of an emergency or a message from home.

The State Department has visa requirements and Rotary International has requirements, all of which must be adhered to for the program to continue and these travel forms are required by everyone. A student's visa may be revoked if their whereabouts are unknown (i.e., they are traveling and did not complete the form) which will result in immediate expulsion from the RMRYE program and The United States. The travel desires of an exchange student should not place a burden on the Host Family.

We are not trying to prevent students from traveling or reduce their fun. However, Rotary is responsible for the students' safety and compliance with all laws, rules and regulations and therefore must know where the student is at all times.

*International Travel: Any Travel outside of the 50 States*

International travel requires additional approval and original signatures. Students should NEVER travel internationally without explicit prior approval and without specific forms from the RMRYE Visa and SEVIS coordinator. A student's failure to have these forms at time of border crossing will likely result in the student's detention and eventual deportation.

This includes travel to Mexico, Canada, and closed loop Caribbean Cruises.

*NO UNACCOMPANIED TRAVEL BY OUR INBOUND STUDENTS WILL BE PERMITTED.*

Inbound students cannot travel by themselves to meet up with their parents in a different state. It is recommended that the visiting parents keep their travel with the students within Colorado.

Students can miss up to 10 days of school, these days cannot be added to a school break, example: adding additional days to extend their Spring Break.

Unaccompanied travel to and from BELO authorized Rotary District 5450 trips will be allowed.

UNAUTHORIZED TRAVEL WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT BEING RETURNED HOME IMMEDIATELY

Travel Permission Form [available ONLY online at: rmrye.org](http://rmrye.org)

*Release and consent by Student and his/her Parents or Legal Guardians an RMRYE*

*We the parents or legal guardians of the Rotary Youth Exchange Student shown above give permission for him/her to travel to the destination shown above, at (and only at) the time shown above, with the other travel arrangements, such as companions and host shown above.*

*We agree that either the student or we will pay all expenses for that travel.*

*In consideration for Rotary's granting permission to travel to the student named above, we the parents or legal guardians and the student, to the full extent permitted by law, hereby release and agree to hold harmless and indemnify all host parents, members of their families, all members, officers, directors, committee member and employees of all host and sponsor Rotary Clubs, Districts and organizations, Rocky Mountain Rotary Youth Exchange and Rotary International, of and from all liability or any property loss, property damage, personal injury or death, including such liability which may arise out of the negligence of any such persons or entities which may be suffered or claimed by the student, parents or guardians during the period of his/her travel, including travel to and from the destination described above, or elsewhere, expressly waiving any and all claims for liability which we or any of us assert. Student agrees not to deviate from stated travel plans without first informing RMRYE and further agrees to not participate in any activity not covered by their insurance.*

*We further understand that if such travel is to occur following the student's exchange year, the permission and release shall apply to any and all travel thereafter, including travel from the host town, it being understood the student is no longer under the auspices of the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program and is traveling as an individual without the sponsorship of Rotary International, host and sponsor Rotary Districts, host and sponsor Rotary clubs, without Rotary sponsored insurance and without a Rotary sponsored visa.*

*We have read all of the above and agree to these terms and restrictions:*

## **Appendix D – First Night Questions With Host Family HAVE FUN WITH THESE QUESTIONS**

These questions are available in multiple languages at [http://yeoresources.org/First\\_Night\\_Questions.htm](http://yeoresources.org/First_Night_Questions.htm)

1. What do I call you? “Mom”, “Dad”, or given (first) name?
2. What am I expected to do daily other than:
  - a. Make my bed
  - b. Keep my room tidy
  - c. Clean the bathroom up after I use it?
3. What is the procedure about dirty clothes? Where do I keep them until wash day?
4. Should I wash my own underclothes?
5. What is the procedure if I need to iron my clothes?
6. May I use the iron, washing machine, sewing machine, etc.?
7. Where can I keep my bathroom accessories?
8. When is the most convenient time for me to use the bathroom on weekday mornings?
9. When is the best time for me to shower or bathe?
10. When are mealtimes?
11. Do I have a regular job at mealtimes? Set, clear, wash, dry the dishes, the garbage?
12. May I help myself to food and drinks (non-alcoholic) at any time or must I ask first?
13. What areas are strictly private e.g., your study, bedroom, pantry, etc.?
14. May I put posters and pictures in my room? On the wall? How do you want things hung?
15. What are your feelings about my drinking alcohol if offered by you?
16. Do you object to my having wine at the table with you or an occasional beer?
17. What time must I get up weekday mornings?
18. What time should I get up weekends and holidays?
19. What time must I go to bed weekdays? Weekends?
20. What time must I be in on school nights if I go out? (Exceptions by special arrangement).
21. What time must I be in on weekends if I go out?
22. What dates are the birthdays of family members?
23. May I have friends stay overnight?
24. What is your rule on entertaining friends in my room with the door closed?



25. Can I invite friends over during the day? After school? When no one else is home?
26. What are the rules about phone calls video chats back home and with friends here?
27. What are the rules about access to the Internet if using a family computer? Are there time limits or time periods that use is permitted or prohibited?
28. May my friends call me? What times are not good?
29. What is the procedure about posting mail?
30. Do any of you have any pet dislikes? e.g. chewing gum, music types, being late, wearing curlers or a hat at the table, being interrupted while reading, etc.
31. How do I get around? bus, bicycle, be driven, riding with friends, etc.
32. What about transportation to the mall or movies?
33. May I play the stereo or TV?
34. May I use kitchen appliances? Microwave? Dishwasher? Stove?
35. What are the rules about going to church?
36. May I smoke? Where? (Rotary discourages smoking in general and forbids smoking in bedrooms)
37. If I have something bugging me, how do you want me to handle it?
  - a. Write a note explaining it
  - b. Ask for a heart-to-heart discussion
  - c. Tell my counselor
  - d. Keep it to myself and live with it
38. How often can I go out each week?
39. Who pays for "event" expenses? me? you? Rotary? (movies, sports events, concerts/shows)
40. Can I use the shampoo and tooth paste or buy my own?
41. What do I do about school lunch? Buy- who pays- me, you, Rotary? Bring from home?
42. Are there any eating habits or foods I need to discuss? I don't like \_\_\_\_\_.

**In general, ask about those things you feel are most important the first night, and then the others over the next few nights. Try to always keep an open and honest communication with your Host Family and Rotary.**

# Appendix E – It's Time To Go Home

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## Context

You're sitting in "your" room. In any case, it's the room that you've come to know as your own. You have, after several months, adjusted to your host culture. You probably feel as if you have finally become a member of this new culture. You have made friends, gone to school, become a member of a family. Many people don't even believe that you are American.

Remember how you felt when you first arrived in this new place? You knew that you would experience "culture shock," but you had no idea just how intense those feelings would be. For the first part of your year, you had moments where you wanted nothing but to go home. But you stuck it out. You don't know when it happened, but one day you realized that you had made it. You woke up from a dream in another language. You were mistaken for a "native" in a restaurant. You forgot certain things about the United States. You changed.

Now it's almost time to go home. Once again, you are on a roller coaster of emotions. You are excited to see your American family and friends again, but at the same time you are filled with feelings of anxiety and fear. You are starting to experience the initial phase of "re-entry shock."

## What to Expect

Because no two people are exactly alike, it's hard to predict exactly what you will go through when you return home. It's important, however, to anticipate and to prepare yourself for the possibilities. If you feel that you have adjusted well to your host culture, if you feel that, in many ways, you have "become" French, or Belgian, or German, or Mexican, etc., you will most likely have a more challenging time coming home. It is ironic that the more "successful" you have been as an exchange student, the more difficult it will be for you to adjust to being American again. Just as you survived and indeed excelled as an exchange student, so too will you re-adjust to being back home.

### **This isn't Home!**

You have probably constructed all kinds of mental pictures about what coming home will be like. You know that you have changed. Be prepared for things at home to have changed as well. Your siblings have grown; your friends have moved on; your parents may have renovated the house. The home that you return to can never really measure up to the "home" that has existed in a dream-like quality in your head for all of these months.

A valuable aspect of living in another culture is that it provides you with another perspective of the United States. What you have learned about the U.S. while you have lived abroad may, in fact, be negative. You may find, especially for the first month or so back home, that nothing is as you remembered, and nothing is as wonderful as it was in your host country. You may find that most Americans are too consumer-oriented, too fast-paced, too overtly friendly, insincere, or too whatever. You may feel as if you just want to withdraw and daydream about your host country. Don't.

Know that, in time, you will readjust. Try not to constantly complain to your friends and family. Remind yourself how you felt the first month or so of your exchange. Reread your journal. It may help keep your perspective.

### **You're a Different Person**

Be prepared. Your parents may not recognize you at the airport. You may have put on weight, changed your hairstyle. You have physically matured. You have adopted the fashions of your host culture. For the past few months, you probably didn't want to "look" like an American. And now you don't. You may want to send a current photo of yourself to your family. That way how you look when you come home won't be a tremendous shock for them!

You have changed inside as well. You are not the same person you were before you left. You have experienced many things. You have learned so much about others and about yourself. Your insights have been challenged and broadened. You will now see the world from another perspective, and you won't even realize how much your insights and values have changed until you come home. It is important that you understand that those back home have not experienced what you have. Your friends and family will not necessarily appreciate being told that they have silly habits, or that what they eat is disgusting, or that you disapprove of how they do or see things. You must remember to be diplomatic and not negative.

It is true that sometimes you will feel isolated and misunderstood. Your friends and family will tire of hearing about your year abroad. They will become exasperated every time you bring up your host country. They may tune you out. Try not to wallow in self-pity. Don't withdraw. Keep the lines of communication open with your family and friends. They can't understand what you're feeling if you don't tell them. Keep in touch with your friends and family in your host country. Try to make contacts with

other exchange students. They will be valuable resources and provide support for you.

### **Readjusting Socially**

When you first arrived in your host culture, you probably stood out. Everyone recognized you as American. You dressed funny, your accent was strange, or you could hardly speak the language at all. Sometimes you may have felt like a freak. It took some time, but you were finally accepted by your peers in your host culture.

Friends back home have written to you or may even have visited. To some extent they have kept you informed about what's going on back home. There is no way that you could possibly know everything, and you will find that you are a bit behind on the social scene back home.

Styles will have changed, different music will be on the radio, slang expressions will be different, new people will be popular. Once again, you may find yourself feeling like an outsider. Some people will think that you're really cool, while others may make fun of you. In fact, you may find that you don't have a lot in common with the people who were your best friends before you left. Prepare yourself for this; readjusting to social life can be a difficult process for you. Realize that, in some ways, you can reinvent yourself. You have developed a different personality as a result of your year abroad. Embrace the new "you." You have gained valuable insight and maturity--others will surely come to appreciate this about you, especially if you appreciate it about yourself.

### **Is That English You're Speaking?**

If you have been immersed in a language other than English, you may have difficulty expressing yourself appropriately; at least for the first few weeks back home. You will have forgotten words, expressions, and slang. You may "go blank" when trying to communicate. It may be frustrating sometimes. Sometimes, though, it will be amusing to you and to your loved ones. Utilize the process of re-learning English as a way to re-establish relationships. This way, others will feel as if they are contributing to your successful readjustment.

If you have lived in a country where English is spoken, you have most likely developed an accent that is unique to that country. You have learned different terms, different slang, and new expressions. Some people back home may find your new way of speaking to be interesting and unique. Others may think that you're "faking it" or that you have a superior attitude. Don't be discouraged. Others will adjust to your new language mannerisms, and you will soon fall back into an American accent. Remember, all of these adjustment processes require time and patience.

It's important to note that you have developed different non-verbal habits as well. How closely (or not) you stand to someone, the gestures that you use while speaking, how you move your eyes, whether-or-not you make eye contact and with whom, how frequently you touch others, all of these patterns of non-verbal communication may be different for you now. Americans generally maintain a greater spatial distance when interacting than do Western Europeans and South Americans, for instance. Females in Japan do not maintain eye contact with males in the same ways as American females do. You may find that your

patterns of non-verbal communication send different "messages" back home. Be aware of this. You will soon re-adjust your movements to your surroundings.

### **What to Do**

#### **Expect the Unexpected**

As soon as you realize that coming home will be different from what you had imagined, you will have made an important step. Most likely, by now, you are an expert on change. You have experienced many ups and downs and felt like you were on a roller coaster. You have adapted to many kinds of changes, and you have succeeded. Realize that change is inevitable and can ultimately be beneficial to you and to your life. See change as a teacher, as yet another adventure for you to experience.

#### **Your Health Matters**

For the first two weeks back home, you will be exhausted, both physically and emotionally. It may be tempting for you to jump into a busy schedule of parties, get-togethers and reunions. Try to "take it slow" for a while to give yourself time to readjust. You may also feel depressed and anxious from time to time. These feelings are inevitable results of re-entry. They are also temporary.

In time you will feel more comfortable with, and relaxed in, your surroundings.

#### **Be Open in Your Communication**

Some of the frustrations that you will feel as a result of your re-entry can be remedied with thoughtful and open communication. You will occasionally feel out-of-place and misunderstood by your friends and family. Discussing how you feel in a loving way will better ensure that you receive the support you need. Being constantly critical and negative will only serve to further alienate you from your loved ones.

#### **Create a Balance**

You now have a dual identity, a binationality. You are American, but in very real ways, you are also French, German, Austrian, Mexican, etc. Realize how wonderful that is. You will never be "just" American again.

You have been exposed to a whole new world of being and seeing.

#### **YOUR NEW WORLD**

Take a mental inventory of those things about being American that are important to you and combine them with those things that you value about your "new" cultural identity. Be proud of who you are. The experiences that you have had will make you a better-rounded person and a more sensitive member of our global community.

**Welcome home.**

# Appendix F – Some Thoughts for Exchange Students Returning “Home”

By Dennis White PhD

## Initial Culture Shock

Remember what it was like those first few weeks and months going abroad? It was new, exciting, often confusing, and always changing. And while your whole year may have been exciting, it wasn't always pleasant. You probably became irritated with, and even hostile to, your host culture when the deeper differences between your culture and their culture became apparent. As you began to develop real language skills, and you better understood fundamentally different cultural values, you began the slow process of adapting. Eventually, maybe only at the end of your stay, you began to realize how you could really fit in – adapting fairly well to your adopted culture, while maintaining your own native cultural identity. You became bicultural. And then, just when it was getting good, the year was over, and you had to go “home”.

Most people who live abroad for an extended time go through similar successive stages of culture shock. These stages are generally recognized as being:

1. Initial Excitement or Euphoria
2. Irritability and Hostility
3. Slow and Gradual Adaptation
4. Eventual Adjustment to Biculturalism

If your experience was anything like this, you learned that culture shock is not just adjusting to jet lag and different food. It is an on-going process of developing increased cultural competence, by being “shocked” by differences, adjusting to them, learning new skills and eventually adapting. And when you prepared for going abroad, you had some expectation that you would experience culture shock. It is not possible (or even desirable) to avoid culture shock, but at least anticipating it made it somewhat easier - and kept you from thinking it was all your fault, or all the new culture's fault.

## Reverse Culture Shock

As you return home, you are likely to experience some very similar, but possibly surprising, reactions that are part of what is known as reverse culture shock, or re-entry shock. In the first few weeks back, many people feel the effects of jet lag, general exhaustion from lots of changes, fatigue from an overdose of “welcome home” parties and trying to do and see everything and everyone at once. This flurry of activity can cause a significant degree of disorientation, making it difficult to tell exactly what thoughts and feelings you are having.

But mixed in with all of this are two distinct and often conflicting reactions. One is the same excitement stage as in initial culture shock. It may be very exciting to be back, to see family and friends, to talk about your adventures and to do things you have missed for a year. If this reaction occurs, it fairly quickly wears off, and is replaced by the second stage of culture shock - irritability and hostility. This stage often comes much more quickly than in initial culture shock and can be much more severe and disturbing. It also may be the first reaction you have to coming home, with no excitement stage at all.

There are several reasons that you may not feel excitement at all, or for very long. Remember, when you went abroad initially:

1. You wanted to go.
2. You expected and looked forward to learning about different things.
3. You were warned to expect culture shock.
4. Though you may have been sad to leave family and friends, you knew it would not be forever – you knew you were coming back.

Now that you are returning at the end of your exchange year:

1. You may not want to come home.
2. You may expect things to be just like they were when you left (or at least that things will be very familiar)
3. You may not have been sufficiently warned about reverse culture shock (or you didn't think it would happen to you).
4. You may be very sad to leave friends and “family” in your host culture because you know there is a possibility that you may never see them again.

If reverse culture shock is so unpleasant, why not try to avoid it? Because it is impossible if your exchange year was successful. In fact, the extent to which you immersed yourself in your host culture, and truly adapted, is probably the best indicator of how much reverse culture shock you will experience. People who don't have much trouble re-adapting to their native culture probably didn't get very involved in their host culture. They didn't change much, so they don't have to readjust much.

## The Extent of Change

If your exchange year was a success, you have changed in ways that you probably cannot describe, or completely understand yet. You have become a skilled world traveler. You are a skilled bicultural person. You can actually get along quite well, not just be a tourist, in another culture. You have learned to think of things differently by looking at the world from someone else's point of view long enough to really understand it. In a sense, you have become a citizen of the world, so it may be more than a little confusing to think of where “home” is.

Some of these things will probably happen to you. You will find yourself thinking or dreaming in your new language. You will try to explain something to someone back home and not be able to give a precise translation of what you are talking about. You will talk to

your parents about one of your host parents, calling the host parent “mom” or “dad”. You will think your hometown is very small, or that your friends think in “small” ways.

So don’t be too surprised if your family and friends seem a bit uncomfortable with you. They probably are, because you aren’t the same person who left them a year ago. Don’t underestimate how much you have changed and how strange you may seem to those who knew you before. You may be very proud of your independence, self-confidence and internationalism. But they may see you as self-absorbed, critical of everything and not interested in fitting in.

Remember that those around you may have changed as well, if not in the same ways you have. If you are expecting things to be the same, you will have more of a shock than if you are looking for changes. Your friends have had a year of growing and maturing, and your family situation may have changed (deaths, divorces, moves, job changes). You missed some important events in their lives, just as they missed some important ones in yours. Even those things that haven’t really changed may seem quite different, because you see them differently. Though you may love your native country more than ever, you are also much more likely to be critical of it, and question common cultural practices that you took for granted before you left.

### **Ways To Deal With Reverse Culture Shock**

The single best thing you can do is to anticipate and accept that you will experience some degree of reverse culture shock. The worst thing you can do is to deny it or try to avoid it. People often try to deny it because they think there might be something wrong with them if they admit it. It is, in fact, very normal, and you will have more problems than necessary if you try to deny it.

More than anticipating and accepting reverse culture shock, you can actually view it as a positive, if sometimes painful, growth experience. It is, and can be, the completion of the circle of change in an intercultural experience. I like to think of it as the third year of your exchange. The first was the year preparing to go abroad. The second was the actual exchange. The third is the year when you can more completely appreciate the changes you have made, the readjustment to your native culture, and the fact that you will be bicultural for the rest of your life. In subsequent years you will have times when you re-experience reverse culture shock, and when you feel like you just got home again; but it will never be as shocking an experience as that first year back.

You can also help yourself by talking about your feelings as often as you can. You may wear out lots of initially sympathetic ears doing this. You may notice that you seem to have an almost incessant need to talk about your experiences. Your friends, especially, may get impatient with you, so you may need to learn to be selective with whom you share your experiences. There is often a conflicting urge to keep it all to yourself, because you think people won’t understand or don’t care, or because you think that talking about it in the past tense confirms that it is over - and you don’t want to accept that. (Many students don’t completely unpack for months, for the same reason - they don’t want to admit that it is over.) Of course, that’s the issue - it’s over and it isn’t. The experience is over, but not the memories and the impact on your life.

Sometimes it’s best to find other recently returned students, or even people who have been back for years. You can tell how this feeling lingers when exchange students, Peace Corps Volunteers or missionaries start talking about their experiences, even if many years ago. They get excited, they can’t stop talking, and they get a glassy, far-off look on their faces. And don’t underestimate your parents as listeners. Sometimes they are the only ones who will politely listen as you tell a story for the hundredth time. But however, you do it, talk. It is in this way that you can help others understand you, and more importantly, learn to clarify your thoughts and feelings and better understand yourself.

You can also make things easier for yourself by trying not to make too many big decisions, unless you absolutely have to. Don’t be impatient with yourself if you have trouble making decisions. Your goals in life may have changed. Because you have a new perspective, some of the plans you made a year or more ago may not seem as relevant now. Remind yourself, your family and friends that you are going through a period of adjustment; and it may take time for you to sort things out.

Finally, don’t be too concerned if the course of your reverse culture shock doesn’t seem to follow the pattern described here. Each of your experiences abroad was unique, and so will be your re-entry. While your year abroad was probably of great value to you, you may not have had the same emotional attachment to people that other students describe. You may not have as much trouble letting go of those attachments and getting on in life with new and renewed friends. Going on to college or university is also quite different than returning to high school, and some of the issues are different for these two situations.

### **Feeling “At Home”**

Reverse culture shock subsides, though it never disappears. Eventually you will come to terms with yourself and your “new” native culture, incorporating the fact that you are now a member of another culture as well. You can learn to be at peace with true biculturalism. This is the ability to move from cultural practice to cultural practice, with skill, as the situation calls for it. And while you may somewhat sadly come to accept that you can never truly come “home” again, you can learn to feel “at home” in the world at large.

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