

Re-Entry Stress

Definition

1. Re-entry stress is like culture stress in many ways-only in reverse. While culture stress is associated with a sense of disorientation brought on by a new and unfamiliar environment, re-entry stress is precipitated by returning to a setting you presume to be familiar, but which in reality is no longer the same.
2. Your once familiar and comfortable environment no longer appears the same. Something definitely has changed. But you don't easily recognize just what has been altered.
3. Suddenly you find yourself out of phase with your own culture. Your reaction may come in the form of bewilderment, dismay, disillusionment, and perhaps even irritation or anger. Somehow, things are not the way they used to be - nobody seems to care, nobody really understands.
4. There are several contributing factors to re-entry stress. One is that you are being caught by surprise. You do not anticipate change and consequently are unprepared to cope. Another factor is value conflict. Your values, once taken for granted and even highly cherished, now seem of lesser significance or of little importance at all. Your way of thinking, your manner and your responses to many situations have been changing. Often these changes are not apparent until you are back in your own culture

Common Symptoms and Effects of Re-Entry Stress

1. Disorientation – feeling out of place, not fitting in
2. Feelings of loneliness, isolation, or being lost in the crowd
3. Restlessness – a desire to —get away from those who don't seem to understand or care
4. Feeling that nobody understands your experience or cares
5. Critical attitude toward home country – its waste, extravagance, wrong way of doing things, etc.
6. Feeling of superiority – standing aloof from others because of your overseas experience

Some Practical Suggestions

1. Find other returnees with whom you can share and have fellowship.
2. Recognize and accept which transition stage you are going through, and remember that reverse culture shock, or re-entry shock, is a normal part of the process of returning home.
3. Have a good sense of humor.
4. Appreciate the opportunity you had to go abroad and the commitment to return home.
5. Keep a clear perspective and remember that God is with you!
6. Remember that God called you to a short-term mission trip. You have fulfilled that calling. If He is calling for vocational service, explore and pray about the options.

