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A Plan sent to a group in New Zealand who wished to conduct a short program for their own members.

Excerpts from Covering Letter

Here is a three day plan that will give you a starting point.

I do not know the book you referred to by Neal Pirolo but I believe it is important to build up as many as those kind of resources as possible so that the team keeps broadening its understanding of the issues that are likely to arise, and also to keep their focus on the explicit re-entry purpose of the program.

I have just browsed the internet and found the enclosed sheet from the Federation of Returned Overseas Missioners (F.R.O.M) that also goes under the name *Mission to Mission*. We found their materials very helpful when we were beginning so I recommend that you build them also into your resources. Their internet address is: <[www.missiontomission.org](http://www.missiontomission.org)> - worth exploring! and their email is <[frommission@aol.com](mailto:frommission@aol.com)>

In putting together a program you will always be guided by the skills of the facilitators regarding the methods you employ. However, no matter what their method the importance of a process that enables the participants to tell their stories in a way that helps them and helps their companions is central. The program should enable them to attend to unfinished business and have some sense of what next to do by way of self-help. We use mostly sociodrama and find it very worthwhile tool.

### **3 day Transition Program for Returned Missionaries**

**PURPOSE:** To assist those who have been in another culture to process their experience of living in the other culture and the impact of reentry so they can move forward with greater freedom and sense of purpose

**GOALS:** For each one to tell his or her story as fully as possible

To affirm the person in his or her missionary calling

To give assistance in addressing unfinished business that can delay the process of closure.

To help participants articulate the impact of reentry

Help participants name the next step each will take as a way of self-help in dealing with their cultural transition

### **METHODS**

Story telling in pairs, small groups

Large group story telling through display rather than narration

Sharing of photographs and memorabilia

Handouts and group sharing on personal experiences of culture jolts and culture shock

Gathering prayers which capture the group's themes or moods

(There is usually a group theme that emerges: e.g. violence; deaths; loss of identity; lack of support; church; isolation; Eucharist; friendships etc. It is good if this can be named - it gives the group a sense of bonding and freedom to talk about the issue.)

Time for informal sharing

### **DAY ONE**

#### **GATHERING PRAYER**

Have map of the world on the floor, central to where group is gathering, a lighted candle and a bible. Near the map have a tea light candle for each person.

After greeting everyone ask them to sit quietly with the Taize Chant, "Veni Sancte Spiritus"

During the singing each one lights a candle and puts it on the country where he/she has been

Scripture Mark 6:7 - 13; 30 - 32 is read

A gathering prayer to the Holy Spirit is said as a conclusion

#### **INTRODUCTIONS:**

Go round the circle and say name and where you are living now.

Facilitators give personal introduction in relation to work with missionaries - Hopefully the three days will help each one to look at their experience again and draw new strength from a further integration.

#### **GIVE THE TIME TABLE - ACTION METHODS - STORY - EVENINGS FOR INFORMAL SHARING**

All stand in circle and a cushion is thrown. On each round of the throw a different piece of information is given by the one who throws.

1. Give us your full name and any other names by which you may have been called. How do you want to be called in the group?
2. How did you come and what was involved in getting here - travel etc.
3. Where have you been in cross cultural ministry? When did you go and when did you return?
4. Talk about something you are wearing as a way of telling us something more about yourself.

#### **CONNECTING AND CREATING SAFETY**

Find a partner and sit in pairs

After each question ask them to change partners so as much connecting as possible takes place

1. What moved you to accept the invitation to come to the program?
2. What do you miss of the place where you have been?
3. What is something you do not miss?
4. What was your favourite passtime while you were away? - kept you sane!

**LARGE GROUP:** How were those few sharings? What is happening for you?

#### **HOPES AND FEARS:**

Find two symbols: *One for what you hope will happen in these three days; one for what you fear may happen. We will try to fulfill each one's hopes, and the fears usually disappear once we have expressed them to*

*the group, however knowing them can help us to be sensitive to each other in not asking people to do what they do not want to do.*

Share symbols in pairs or groups of three

**LARGE GROUP:** Share symbols with less detail Address any fears that require some reassurance

**CLOSURE:** Large group What does it feel like to be with this group of people?

Tea or meal break

## **STORY TELLING**

**DRAWINGS:** Choose someone with whom you would like to share more of your story and arrange where you will meet in 15 minutes time. In the meantime go by yourself and let any memory that you have of your time away come back to you and draw it; do not have to be a masterpiece. For the next 30 minutes share with your companion

**LARGE GROUP:** Work with the drawings.

People talk about what it was like to start telling their story.

Ask someone to put their drawing out for the group. This is where we go into sociodrama by getting them to set out all or part of the drawing and interact with it.

After each person has presented this part of their story there is a sharing in which the others are asked to share with the person what happened for them as they heard the story. This is an extremely important part of the process. It is not a time for congratulating, affirming or advising the one who presented but of saying what happened for me as you told me your story; what in my experience matches yours in some way; what memories did you awaken in me.

The person who presents is thus brought back naturally into the group and does not feel alone in the disclosure they have made of themselves whilst the others are led to ownership of their own experiences.

Continue the day with the drawings. Possibly no more than four people would have presented

**CLOSURE** Recap the day and set the scene for tomorrow.  
Suggest some informal sharing of photos in the evening  
Invite them to express how they are at the end of the day.

HANDOUT AT END OF FIRST DAY:

*CULTURE JOLTS AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS*

## **DAYS TWO and THREE**

Gathering prayers for about 10 minutes - capture the mood or theme of previous day or the new day as a way of keeping the group connected with the process

### **CONTINUE WITH THE PICTURES UNTIL ALL HAVE PRESENTED.**

Photos and memorabilia shared in small groups is another effective tool for story telling.  
Just make sure that everyone tells their story in a way that is satisfying to them.

When all have shared their picture or told their story to the group use the material in *Culture Jolts and Cultural Adjustment* for group to share their experiences of adjustment.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** Find a dynamic whereby people can name any unfinished business that they carry that prevents them from giving closure to the place where they have been.  
Gestalt empty chair conversations can be helpful.

Another good exercise is to sit in circle and one at a time each one turns to the next person as if that person were someone they have left behind to whom they have something to say that they never got around to saying or the situation was such that it was not possible. It can be a word of appreciation or resentment or farewell or whatever.

## THE TRANSITION PROCESS

Show the video *TRANSITIONS*. Share in small groups.

REENTRY Give the handout on re-entry - take time to read

Set up spectagram with three stages.

Letting Go

Letting Be

Letting Begin

Stand where they are at this moment and one at a time share why they have chosen that place.

Each one take one step that indicates the concrete step they are going to take to help themselves with their re-entry. Again, one at a time, say what their step is.

CLOSURE : Two symbols - one for the gifts they left behind and one for the gifts they received.

Share in large group

Short ritual for appreciating each one's contribution, saying thanks or affirming each other.

Group prepares a closing liturgy

Can be good if they have each other's address and phone/email for the sake of ongoing support.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO BE MORE SPECIFIC ABOUT DAYS TWO AND THREE AS YOU NEED TO GO WITH WHAT THE GROUP PRESENTS.