

*Twelve Tips*

**TWELVE TIPS FOR  
WELCOMING RETURNEES HOME**

Dr. Bruce LaBrack and Margaret D.Pusch

1. Understand that ‘reverse culture shock’ is a real possibility and learn to recognize its symptoms so you can offer appropriate support to the returnee.
2. Realize that returning home is not a predictable process and can be more stressful than the returnees or you anticipate. Be prepared to offer support long-distance as they anticipate coming home and especially after their return.
3. Understand that most returnees are, in some ways, different than they were before they left home. They may initially seem to be “strangers.” It is hard to know what their experiences have meant to them and how they have changed. It may be necessary to “renegotiate” your relationship with returnees but your history together will provide a basis for this process.
4. Be aware of your own expectations of the returnee. You may wish that they would just fit back in but it is more helpful if you avoid forcing the returnees into old roles and relationships. Allow them space and time to readjust and reconnect.
5. Be conscious of all those things that have changed at

10. Offer to mark and celebrate the reentry for the returnees and those who stayed at home. Discuss their preferences for how and when to do so. Be careful of surprise parties.
11. Expect some critical comparisons of culture and lifestyle. Keep your responses neutral. It can increase your chances to learn something important about the returnees and how their world view has changed. Don't take their comments personally.
12. Make contact with people who have successfully gone through the experience of returning home and refer the returnee to them - it may help both you and the returnee through a difficult period of readaptation.

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