From Here to There... and Back Again!

Tips for returning to campus life after studying abroad.

Interested? Contact:

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with some of the challenges of returning to college life. If so, the counselors at the Engle Center are a great resource. We have a special interest in helping students when they return to campus after studying abroad. Talking with a counselor can also be a great way to help you integrate the new things you have learned about yourself and the world outside of Messiah.
You thought you were prepared for the “back again” part. You talked about “re-entry” before you left, read about it, maybe even went through a reorientation seminar before leaving your host country. So, how’s it going now?

If you’re finding it challenging to shift back to a faster pace, finding academic pressure leaves too little time to readjust and reconnect, or having a hard time hanging on to the ideas you formed and changes you made while away you’re not alone. You may be finding it frustrating to do “community life” after being so independent, and resenting the “rules and regulations.”

Perhaps you’re having a hard time finding where you fit now, feeling as if your close friends have moved on without you, and finding it difficult to express new aspects of yourself to old friends. You may even be feeling frustrated and disappointed as you try to share the excitement of your study abroad experience with friends who don’t seem to have the interest or attention span to hear what you have to say.

Being immersed in a new culture can be exciting, intense and even life changing. Almost every student experiences some re-entry challenges when they return, and some students find themselves struggling with quite a few challenges as they return to “normal” college life. To paraphrase one student “So much about me feels different but on the surface it all looks the same so everyone assumes I will just fit right back in.”

If you feel as if you’re not fitting back in or if the idea of fitting in is unwelcome to you because you want to hold on to the important changes you’ve made, what can you do?

1. **Check your expectations.** This is a transition process, not an event. Give yourself and your friends some time to get reacquainted.

2. **Be proactive.** Seek out others who have studied abroad and talk with them about what you are experiencing.

3. **Break it down.** While you are having difficulties in some areas, you may be doing very well in others. Make a list of things that are going well in addition to the things that still need work.

4. **Share the Wealth.** Readjusting doesn’t require that you “mothball” your experiences or the changes you made. Find a language partner you can talk with to retain your proficiency. Prepare a meal of your new favorite foods for your friends. Make a list of the changes you made which you would like to retain and go over it regularly.

5. **Get extra help if you need it.** Maybe you feel as if you are doing all the right things, but you still find yourself struggling