

Closure

End of year debriefing

God

- How did God use you in unexpected ways?
- When did you rely most on God?
- When did you experience God's forgiveness, grace, comfort, prompting?
- What did you see that made you doubt God's goodness?
- Who are the people that most represented Christ to you? Why? How?

Others

- When did you have interpersonal conflict and why?
- What did you learn about your part in the body of Christ?
- What are the similarities between you and those in this community? Differences? What weighed more for you during the year? Why?

Self

- What did you learn about your values in these areas: time, body, work, communications?
- What did you find negative in yourself? What does this say about you?
- What did you find positive? What does this say about you?
- What will you change?
- What is one memory you will cherish most?

Use the week to spend time with folks from church.

Sit together around the table and write letters...it's a good way to get the SA story told and helps them "remember" their year.

Find time to pull each participant aside and ask them face-to-face to critique and/or praise their experience with SA. Use it as a time to affirm them and thank them for spending a year in SA.

Do some fun stuff that is relaxing and community building.

*What does it mean to remember something well?
We used an exercise that connected to some stuff we had been talking about on faith nights. How to get outside of "self" and create compassion for the other.*

Preparing to return home

The last and most often neglected part of an assignment is the reentry phase. For many, the worst kind of shock does not occur when entering a new location but in returning home. When people go somewhere new, they expect to be disoriented or to lack understanding. But upon returning home, they think they will take up their lives exactly where they left off. Soon they discover, however, that their eyes have been opened and their judgments challenged by another community. Home feels like a new place now. They may find themselves not only struggling to adjust but very critical of people or situations they previously tolerated.

Make sure you set aside time during the last month; especially last week to debrief the experience. *The Short Term Missions Handbook* by Tim Dearborn offers “Eight Great Questions” (page 98) for discussion as your group thinks about going home:

- Who am I? What have I learned about myself?
- Who is God? How has my understanding of God changed?
- Who are we? What have I learned about community?
- What is the impact of culture on faith? How do I see life and the gospel differently because of what I have experienced?
- What’s wrong with the world? Why is there suffering and injustice in it?
- What does it mean to be a follower of Christ? What have I learned about discipleship?
- What’s of value? How do I live here in light of what I’ve seen there?
- Where am I going? What is God calling me to be and do as a result of this experience?

Another possibility for debriefing is the following questions from Kim Hurst in *The Art of Debriefing*. Use whichever format works best for you, or use a combination of the two.

Three focuses of debriefing

- What happened between God and me?
- What happened between others and me?
- What happened within me?

Questions: God

- How did God use me in unexpected ways?
- When did I rely most on God?
- When did I experience God’s forgiveness? Grace? Comfort? Prompting?
- What did I see that made me doubt God’s goodness?
- Who are the people that most represented Christ to me? Why? How?

Questions: Others

- When did I have interpersonal conflict and why?
- What did I learn about my part in the body of Christ?
- In what ways did I diminish/complete others and they me?

- Where are the similarities between me and those in this community? The differences? Which weighed more for me during this year? Why?
- How will I respond differently the next time I'm in a situation like this?

Questions: Self

- What did I learn about my values in these areas: time, body, work, communications, other.
- What did I find negative in myself? What does this say about me?
- What did I find positive? What does this say about me?
- What will I change?
- What's the one memory I'll cherish the most?

Transitions and re-entry

What other experiences have you had where you were gone from home and returned after some time? How did the transition go?

Although you are excited about future plans, transitions are not usually easy—at times it will be lonely and you may feel like no one really understands you. People may not have interest in what your experience may have been or its significance in your life. What might help you prepare for this?

What are geographical, cultural or other differences between home and here? What is “normal” life and how will that differ from life in Service Adventure? Where are you headed next and how will it be different from Service Adventure?

What change do you think will have occurred in people back home? How have you changed that could make it difficult to relate to people at home?

What will you take with you from Service Adventure and incorporate into your future life? What life lessons have you learned that you don't want to forget? Write a letter to yourself six months into the future with encouragement and advice.

Find a symbol that represents your Service Adventure experience to bring it to worship.

How have I changed?

How have I changed in regard to each of the following since I entered the Service Adventure program?? (Use your journal to aid reflection)

- A) Work (skills, interests, work habits, etc.)
- B) Life Skills (cooking, cleaning, shopping, money management, etc.)
- C) Learning to live with others
- D) Christian life and beliefs

E) Church

F) Self-awareness (what have you learned about yourself?)

G) Self-acceptance (what about yourself can you accept that you couldn't before?)

H) Relationship to family and people back home

I) Plans for the future

How will these changes impact the way I relate to my home congregation, family and friends?

How will these changes impact the way congregation, family, and friends relate to me?

What values of my family, church, school and home community do I want to keep? Which ones do I want to delete, reshape or add?

Letter of farewell

To: _____

From: _____

One memory with you that I will always cherish is...

Some things I most appreciate about you are...

I saw Christ in you most clearly when...

Your greatest strengths are...

I see you blocking your strengths by...

My hope for you is...

Moving on

Short answers, one or several words

Leaving

- When I think of leaving I feel...
- My experience has been....
- For me, Service Adventure means....
- The people I will miss are....
- The things I will miss are
- The things I will be happy to leave behind are....

- The easiest point of leaving for me will be....
- The most stressful part of leaving will be...
- Before I leave, I really want to....
- I feel that my goals and expectations have been....

Expectations

- I expect that the process of returning will be...
- I expect the reception from my family will be...
- I expect that the reception from my church will be...
- I expect the reception from my friends will be....
- I expect the reception from my current housemates next year to be...
- I think my family will expect me to...
- I think my church will expect me to...
- I think my friends will expect me to...
- I think my current housemates will expect me to...
- For my career, I hope to.....

Returning

- When I think of returning home, I feel...
- I will be going back to...
- Regarding money, I will be...
- Going back will enable me to...
- I think the hardest part of going back for me will be....
- I think the easiest part of going back will be....
- I am really looking forward to...

Settling-in

To be completed 1-2 months after returning home

- Now that I am back home, I feel....
- I now find it easy to...
- I now find it hard to...
- I wish...
- The people who I feel understand me are....
- I like being with...
- I enjoy (name an activity)...
- My family says I...
- My friends think I am...
- My pastor or other church leader has asked me to...
- I need help in...
- I need someone who...

Reflections to share with my home congregation

Start off by writing freely, you can edit later. Plan on sharing this with our group; you will probably get some more ideas after you hear what others have shared. The Service Adventure director will also want a copy of your final draft, attached to the yearend evaluation.

What has God taught me (or what have I become aware of) through this experience?

- About yourself, about God, about the world
- About community living, about simple living, about service
- About my family and my home congregation

In what ways did I make a contribution? (jobs, church, household, etc.)

Where/how did I gain the greatest sense of satisfaction? (A story or two would be good here to make it more personal.)

Where did I struggle the most? What things helped me get through the hard times?

How has this year impacted my thoughts about the future? What are my future plans? How can the church support/pray for me?

On saying goodbye: Dealing with transitions and endings

What does it mean to “Say Goodbye”?

Generally, we think of saying goodbye as a way of expressing best wishes at the time of parting. More broadly speaking however, “saying goodbye” can mean acknowledging, reflecting on, and preparing for upcoming life changes and the losses that accompany them.

The Losses Which Accompany Change.

It has been said that one of the few constants in life is change. While we often look favorably upon change and focus upon what we will be gaining, we must also contend with the fact that with change comes loss. For instance, while graduations may be perceived as accomplishments and as marking the beginning of a new, exciting phase of life, they can also involve numerous losses, including: loss of a support network, a routine, a sense of youth, and a familiar environment. To some degree, they can even include a loss of one’s sense of identity.

Graduations, relocations, career changes and all other major transitions offer us the opportunity to say “hello” to a new phase of life and, just as importantly, give us the chance to bid farewell to the old. They are times in which it is appropriate not only to look ahead but also to look back, acknowledging to ourselves and to others that what we are leaving will be missed.

Why Say Goodbye?

Just as viewing a good ending to a movie can greatly enhance our feelings about the movie as a whole, so can appropriately saying goodbye heighten our positive feelings about the phases of our lives that are coming to an end. When we take the time to “say goodbye”, to reflect on and prepare for upcoming

transitions in our lives, we often gain a sense of closure or finality and feel better prepared to continue on in life. Saying goodbye can reduce later feelings of disorientation and disappointment and can increase feelings of power, control, and predictability. Saying goodbye allows for a period of review and assessment; it gives us the chance to step back, take stock of our lives, and get a broader perspective on what different activities and relationships have meant to us. By doing so, we can move on to the next phase of our lives feeling better about where we have been and where we are going.

How Should You Say Goodbye?

Coping with loss is a very personal experience and what works best for one person may be far less beneficial for another. Nevertheless, certain general guidelines can be offered regarding how to deal with major transitions in life.

Five d's for successfully dealing with departure and loss

- Determine ways to make your transition a gradual process. Weeks or even months ahead of time, begin to think about what it will mean to leave the current phase of your life so that you can adequately prepare yourself and relish your remaining time.
- Discover the significance that different activities have had in your life. Step back and spend some time reflecting, reviewing, and reminiscing on your life and the current transition that you face.
- Describe this significance to others. You may find it helpful to share with others how you feel about them and what their absence in your life will mean to you. This process can be bittersweet; it hurts but at the same time can leave you (and those around you) with a special feeling about your relationships, activities, and, more generally, the phase of your life that is ending.
- Delight in what you have gained and in what lies ahead of you. Treasure the special memories and the possessions you have that remind you of important relationships and activities. Rejoice in what you have learned and how you have grown through the phase of your life which is now ending. Strive to feel good about what you will be starting next in life while realistically acknowledging the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead of you.
- Define areas of continuity in your life. While it is important to realize what will be changing in your life, you can also benefit from reminding yourself of ways in which your life will remain the same. Although you may be leaving certain cherished friends and loved ones, you may be able to find ways to experience some of these relationships as continuing despite the distance. A sense of continuity can be gained through making plans for future contacts, reunions, return trips to college, and so forth. A sense of continuity can also be derived from reminding yourself that in some ways, the person you have become has incorporated aspects of your past relationships and activities.

Five d's for unsuccessfully dealing with departure and loss

- Deny the loss. By focusing only on the phase of your life that you are about to enter and failing to think about the phase that is ending, you may be setting yourself up for pain and distress when you realize what you have lost after you have lost it (at which point you no longer have the opportunity to prepare yourself for the parting).
- Distort your experience by over glorifying it. Overly idealizing your past experiences on a continual basis can lead to your not letting go of the past. It also makes the past an incredibly tough act to follow; the future is likely to pale by comparison.
- Denigrate your activities and relationships. The reverse of over glorifying your past is to mentally destroy it - to tell yourself that you are losing nothing of value. Although this strategy may help you

avoid pain, it may also prevent you from growing and benefiting through your past experiences. Using this strategy can result in your passing repeatedly from one phase of your life to another without ever feeling good about what you have done, where you have been, or whom you have known.

- Distract yourself from thinking about departure. Like denying the loss, excessively distracting yourself by keeping busy with other matters prevents reflection on the significance of what is occurring and preparing for the transition.
- Detach yourself abruptly from your activities and relationships. This strategy, like denigrating your experiences, can be viewed as an attempt to avoid pain. It can also leave you with the illusion of being empowered and in control. However, it prevents you from gaining a feeling of closure or a sense of resolution to the phase of your life that you are leaving and can cause others to feel abandoned and hurt.

How will it feel to say goodbye?

Losses, even when handled well, often hurt. Yet acknowledging the pain can help you to admit to the importance which past relationships and activities have had in your life and can help to earn them a permanent place of importance in your memories. It may also heighten your ability to invest yourself in new relationships and activities and can help you in saying your future goodbyes. Thus while saying goodbye can be difficult, it can also be very rewarding. So take the time to acknowledge the endings in your life and to make the most of your departures. Take the time to say goodbye.

Placement year-end evaluation

Sample letter to placement supervisors and year-end evaluation form.

Dear Supervisor

Thank you so much for your willingness to work with the Service Adventure Program this year. Without you, the program would not have been able to work in the same way! I appreciate your willingness to be a supervisor and am thankful for the role you play in the lives of the volunteers. I hope that this has been a positive experience for you—I know it has been wonderful for the participants!

I would greatly appreciate it if you would fill out the enclosed evaluation of your volunteer and mail (or return) it to me within the next week. Please feel free to add any comments that you think would be helpful for me to hear.

Enjoy your summer!

Blessings

[Name]

Unit leader, Johnstown Service Adventure Program

Service Adventure

End of Year Worker Evaluations

2007-2008

Placement: _____

Volunteer: _____

Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

On a scale of 1-5, rank the volunteer on each of the following characteristics:

		Low-----	Average-----	High			
Promptness		1	2	3	4	5	<u>Comments</u>
Initiative		1	2	3	4	5	
Friendliness		1	2	3	4	5	
Cooperation		1	2	3	4	5	
Reliability		1	2	3	4	5	
Emotional Stability		1	2	3	4	5	
Leadership		1	2	3	4	5	
Decision-Making		1	2	3	4	5	
Observant		1	2	3	4	5	
Job-Ready		1	2	3	4	5	
Responsibility	1	2	3	4	5		
Trust-worthy		1	2	3	4	5	
Honest	1	2	3	4	5		

List 2-3 areas of growth you have seen over the year.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

List 2-3 areas of improvement or growth that will be necessary for future employment.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Based on your experience with this participant in Service Adventure, would you be willing to continue to work with this Service Adventure Placement Program?