

Let's Talk about Returning Home: Information for Parents and Kids. (Christine Asidao, Ph.D. & Tom Baez, Ph.D., CAPS)

- What will it be like when I return to my country?
- Will I be able to keep the friends I made in the U.S.?
- I just got adjusted to the culture shock of living in the U.S., am I going to experience reverse culture shock when I return home?

These are just some of the typical questions moms, dads and kids ask when it's time to leave the United States and return home.

What to expect?

You may be experiencing a variety of feelings such as excitement, sadness, nervousness, stress and joy.

Children may become withdrawn or want to spend more time with friends; they may become distracted and sad. They may have fears about needing to change their acquired American customs and lifestyles.

They may have concerns about leaving friends and re-connecting with old friends. They may worry about readjusting to different ways of schooling, teaching methods, and educational resources. Also, they may not feel like they will fit in to their prior culture and worry about being accepted.

Parents may experience feelings of sadness and anxiety about the move. They may feel frustration because of the time constraints; there isn't enough time to do everything. They may have concerns about legal requirements of leaving and re-entry. Also, they may experience sadness about leaving friends from the U.S. and re-connecting with friends and family from the home country.

Parents may also worry about looking for a new job. They may feel confused about making the right decisions around leaving or transporting personal belongings. Finally, they may struggle with balancing final academic requirements with all the nuances of moving (e.g. academic requirements, VISA, canceling bank accounts, forwarding mail, etc.)

How to cope:

The combination of these stressors can be overwhelming. Here are some suggestions on how to cope:

- Make a prioritized list of what to do.

- Contact the International Center for the latest information on exiting the U.S..
- Make time for meeting with friends and saying good-byes.
- Spend time together as a family, and allow for all (especially children), to express how they feel.
- Let your friends, classmates, co-workers and acquaintances know about your new address so that you can stay in touch.
- Have a good-bye cook out meal with friends you've made in the U.S.. Invite your kids friends too.
- Collect some souvenirs of your stay in Ann Arbor.
- Help your child create an address book for all their friends to fill out. Include space for contact information and photos.
- Read or have your child read stories of how other children cope with moving.
- Be kind to yourself and family during these often times stressful transitions! Eat well, sleep well, and support one another.