



SESSION # 4 REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS (2 OPTIONS FOR THIS SESSION)

Orientation	Pre-Arrival
Session Overview	<p>There are 2 options for Session 4, so read through all options and choose one. The options are <i>Panel Discussion</i> or <i>Realistic Expectations</i>. Both sessions apply cultural knowledge into realistic examples of how the experience might play out in real life.</p> <p>Note the following lesson icons throughout the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ - this indicates a take away point that should not be missed during the lesson • this indicates a question or idea that can be used to facilitate a conversation
Session Objectives	<p>By the end of this session, host families will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify challenges faced by adolescents and families in cross-cultural settings 2. Apply tips and best practices from other host families
Participants	<input type="checkbox"/> Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Host Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Host Siblings
Format	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Active / Interactive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some Activity / Interactivity <input type="checkbox"/> Independent
Duration	~30 minutes
Group Size	Any size
Minimum Staffing	1 facilitator
Materials Needed	<p>Flipchart or whiteboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option #1 - Write topics for panelists • Option # 2- Post-its / Index Cards or Scrap paper • One copy - True/False game at end of this session
Preparation	<p>Choose one of 2 options for session 4 in advance</p> <p>Read lesson to understand concept</p> <p>Create flipchart</p> <p>For Option # 1- At least one week prior to the orientation, carefully select your panelists and ask returning host parents or former exchange</p>

	students who had positive experiences if they'd like to participate. As much as possible adequately represent a variety of models of different family configurations - i.e., adults with no children of their own, only younger children, one-parent families, same sex couples, etc. In advance, discuss the purpose, format and discussion topics of this session with the panelists and supply them with the basic format of the session and handouts to guide their preparation.
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INTRODUCTION (0-5 MINUTES)

1. Use the following **conversation starters** to have an open dialogue with the families about stereotypes.
 - Why did you decide to host an exchange student?
 - What do you know about your student's culture/country? What is this information based on (news, movies, research, etc.)?
 - Why is it important to think critically about stereotypes and cultural biases?
 - What kinds of cultural misunderstanding are you anticipating? Or what have you heard from others about cultural misunderstandings?
 - What kinds of expectations do you have about this experience and your student? Are these realistic?
 - What kind of expectations do you think your student might have, based on stereotypes they might have because of movies and TV shows?
 - Why might having expectations not be a good idea?

During the conversation make sure the participants are directed to these ideas. Highlight these concepts if participants do not mention these:

- ✓ Stereotypes are common and based off our own cultural perspective; often stereotypes are not true or they are very exaggerated.
- ✓ Because you have selected your specific student and you have chosen to be a host family, it is likely you have already developed expectations.
- ✓ Your culture influences your expectations. However, often our expectations are not reality based.
- ✓ Many families suggest letting go of your expectations.
- ✓ Your individual student brings his or her own personal cultural that is much deeper than one can see.
- ✓ Cultural misunderstandings are normal and can be expected. Cultural misunderstandings are a great way to learn and have meaningful conversations about different cultures.

ACTIVITY - CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING 2 OPTIONS

OPTION # 1 – PANEL DISCUSSION (20 MINUTES)

1. **Introduce the panel.** Tell participants that this panel will discuss expectations, cultural misunderstandings and tips. Before getting started, ask each of the panelist to introduce themselves.

- Include the year(s) that they hosted
- Where their student(s) were from
- What motivates them to be a host family

2. **Set the tone** for the panel discussion by explaining the following key points:

- ✓ There is no one “best way” to be a host family.
- ✓ Listen and ask questions, and consider how this advice will work in your own home; perhaps the advice will not work with your family, and that is OK.
- ✓ Remember, every family has their own culture, and every family with have their own experience hosting. There is no one size fits all!

3. Point out the specific topics that are posted on the flip chart and let participants and panelists know that other topics can be brought up as well. Let the conversation flow and encourage questions from the participants. **Topics to discuss:**

- Sibling rivalry/ family dynamics
- The new baby syndrome / Be sure to treat them as your own child
- Ways your student can become a family member
- Electronic curfew and YFU technology challenges
- Open communication to include natural parent communication, relationship, and visits
- Don't make the assumption that students understand everything. Be aware of assumptions about the student's emotions. Ask students how they feel, or what they want/need, don't assume.
- Students often have trouble adjusting To:
 - Lack of public transportation, relying on others for transport
 - Sales tax
 - Air conditioning
 - 3 minutes between classes at school

Note to facilitator: Throughout the panel discussion highlight key themes to a successful hosting experience: **flexibility, patience, understanding, positive attitude, and letting go of preconceived expectations about the student.**

- School culture
- School lockers
- Making change (coins and understanding our system of money)
- Severe weather (tornado drills/snow days)
- Medical options- urgent care versus the emergency room (this is important because a trip to the ER is really expensive)

Close the discussion by summarizing some of the best practices that families offered. Emphasize again that each family has their own experience and new host families can ask for assistance at any time.

OR OPTION #2--REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS (10 minutes)

1. **Have a short conversation** to help families begin to think about their expectations. Use these **conversation starters** or develop your own:
 - If you selected your specific student, why did you choose that student?
 - What do you think you already know about your student? Based on this information, have you started to form expectations?
 - Have you already started to imagine what life will be like once your student arrives? What have you imagined it will be like?
 - Have you thought about how your family is going to adapt with your student?
 - Are these expectations realistic? What do you know about your student's culture/country? What is this information based on (news, movies, research, etc.)?
2. Ask participants to think about possible expectations they have and write them down on the post-its/cards. Couples and partners can work together, or people can work independently. Let families write their ideas for just a few minutes.
3. Then, as a large group, ask the participants read their cards and sort the Post-its/cards into common themes/categories. These can be then posted on flip charts as certain themes become apparent. Possible themes include: Personality traits; preferences; study habits; etc.
4. After sorting them, see where the majority of the expectations are and have a discussion about expectations and how their expectations can reflect their own cultural bias or stereotypes.
5. Follow instructions in the Wrap Up section below.

WRAP UP FOR BOTH OPTIONS (10 MINUTES)

1. Quickly go through the True/False questions:
 - **Our student will be just like the student profile that we read, and the student will match the picture we conjured up in our minds.** True or false?
 - ✓ FALSE. Student profiles give only a glimpse into the personalities, goals, attitudes, and perspectives of YFU exchange students. Also, most students filled out their profile over a year ago, meaning the interests and likes mentioned in their profile might no longer be the case. Keep in mind that the exchange year is a year of growth—both for student and host family!
 - **Our student will be perfect - more of an adult than a teenager.** True or false?
 - ✓ FALSE. Exchange students are brave and can be more mature than their peers in their home country, but they are still teenagers. They will worry about what usual teenagers worry about (school, social acceptance, trying to fit, etc.).
 - **Our student will be best friends with our own children.**
 - ✓ PROBABLY NOT. Just as with natural siblings, it is normal that they develop their own friendships outside of the home. Many host siblings become friends—but it is also perfectly natural for your student to have their own social circles.
 - **Our student will fit right into our family.**
 - ✓ MAYBE. Fitting into the family can take some time as personalities and expectations fall into balance. However, keep in mind that the exchange experience can still be worthwhile even if personalities do not mesh completely.
 - **Our student and family will experience challenges together and will overcome these challenges together, and it will be worth it.**
 - ✓ TRUE. Challenges will happen, requiring patience and understanding. In the end, however, you will help a student to grow beyond him/herself in the course of a remarkable year. (Encourage parents to read the list of “How to Be a Loveable Host Family”)
 - **We will have challenges with our student, but once we overcome our first hurdle, it will be smooth sailing from there.**
 - ✓ PROBABLY NOT. All families have hurdles from time to time, and must adapt to new experiences throughout the year.
 - **Our student will understand our family, our culture, and our community because we have exchanged emails.**
 - ✓ FALSE. The exchange experience is a year-long process, and your student will come to understand your family and environment through living in it. It will take time.

- **Our student has excellent English skills in his/her emails! Our student will speak and understand English without any problems.**

✓ FALSE. Mastery of a second language takes time! Listening to, writing, understanding, and speaking a second language are all very different skills. Your student may excel in one area, and need more practice in others.

2. After going through the True/False points, wrap up discussion using these **conversation starters**:

- Do you think these are realistic expectations? Why or why not?
- Are the majority of the expectations on the student or the host family, or are they balanced?
- Do you see any cultural values or beliefs (the bottom of the iceberg) impacting these expectations?
- How can you prepare yourself if your expectations aren't met? What if your family's expectations conflict with your student's expectations?
- What kind of expectations do you think your student might have based on exposure to movies and TV shows? (Is the US safe? Does everyone own a million-dollar house, etc.)

Note to facilitator: As you wrap up, be sure to emphasize the following important points for comprehension if the families do not talk about these:

- ✓ You have already developed expectations, this is normal.
- ✓ Your culture influences your expectations.
- ✓ Stereotypes are common and based off of our own cultural perspective
- ✓ Try to let go of expectations and think critically about stereotypes.
- ✓ It is probably not going to be exactly what you expect, so it is helpful to try to go into the experience with ...flexibility, patience, understanding and a positive attitude.

Share the following quote to wrap up the discussion:

“We are all like snowflakes, all unique in our own special way. And just like two snowflakes no two people are the same.” Unknown source



3. Acknowledge that while many questions were answered, at the same time many more may have been created. Tell families that during the next session, they will learn about maintaining a balance that comes with adding a new member to the family.



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

PANEL DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Sibling rivalry/ family dynamics
- The new baby syndrome / Be sure to treat them as your own child
- Ways your student can become a family member
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