 parent session

(three activities)

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| Orientation | Re-Entry |
| Session Overview | This session will provide the necessary tools for the host families to handle the emotions, logistics, and possible ways to continue this exchange experience journey. |
| Session Objectives | Host Families will: * prepare you and your family for your students’ return home
* address any fears or expectations you may have, and how to address any fears or expectations your student may have
* provide you with the tools you will need to properly say goodbye and have a sense of closure as the student departs for home
* connect with other host families and the YFU community for continued participation with YFU
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| Participants | [ ]  Students[ ]  Natural Parents | [x]  Host Parents[x]  Host Siblings |
| Format | [ ]  Highly Active / Interactive[x]  Some Activity / Interactivity | [x]  Discussion[ ]  Independent |
| Duration | 80 minutes (with 10 minute break and NOT including 30 minute joint family/student session at the end of the day) |
| Group Size | Any size |
| Minimum Staffing | 2 facilitators-one to lead, a second to record responses |
| Materials Needed | Worksheets* Sticky (post it) notes
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| Preparation | Read through session completely* Prepare Agenda Flipchart (if possible list the actual start and end times)
* Prepare the *Changes in Behavior* flipchart with the following prompts:
* I am proud of how my exchange student has……
* A topic that is currently creating some tension in our household:
* I need advice on:

Aspects of Goodbye worksheet on flip charts – Cut apart each phase with short description and tape to flipchart; post around meeting room. |

Welcome & Goals (35 minutes)

introduction (15 MINUTES)

1. Greet and welcome host families to the parent session of the Re-Entry Orientation.
2. Provide information on logistics, such as location of bathrooms, other rooms or classrooms that will be used, and any other details.
3. Read through the agenda with the parents so they are aware of the timeframe for the day.
4. Introduce facilitators and other volunteers.
5. Introduction of host families (choose 1 of the 2 options below, or use a different name game or icebreaker)
* BASIC INTRODUCTIONS: Each person shares their name, where they are from, and their favorite part about the exchange experience.

Activity #1: amelie’s letter and Workshop GOALS (10 minutes)

1. Thank the host families for coming to the orientation. Facilitate a conversation to introduce “Amelie’s letter” using the bullet points as a guide (or develop your own):
* Here is a letter written by a German exchange student after she returned home. She lived in the US in 2013 and she was a YFU exchange student.
* She wrote a letter about how she is handling her adjustment back in Germany.
* Students will be looking at this letter throughout the day.
* This is important to host families because the exchange students are going through many different emotions. This letter provides a bit of insight to the experience of saying goodbye and the challenges of adjusting to life back in one’s home country.
1. Project it on a slide, if possible, and read the entire letter aloud to the host families.
2. Engage the families in a brief group discussion using the following questions, or develop your own.
* What surprised you about the letter?
* Can you imagine your exchange student feeling this way? What do you think your exchange student is thinking about as he/she begins to think about his/her departure?
* How are you and your family members feeling about your exchange student’s departure? What anxieties or concerns do you have about this process?

FACILITATOR NOTE: If there is a second facilitator, this person can jot down some of the families’ concerns. If not, take note of these so that you can try to address these throughout the sessions.

Explain the objectives for the host family session:

To prepare you and your family for your students’ return home,

To address any fears or expectations you may have, and how to address any fears or expectations your student may have

To provide you with the tools you will need to properly say goodbye and have a sense of closure as the student departs for home

* 1. To connect with other host families and the YFU community for continued participation with YFU

Stress that this orientation is also geared towards answering questions and linking host families to other host families in order to provide support to one another.

activity # 2: Changes in Behavior (20 minutes)

1. Ask families what kinds of changes they have seen in their student over the year? Ask if anyone has any specific stories on how they have seen their student grow and mature.
2. Show the families flipcharts with the three prompts:
	* + I am proud of how my exchange students has……
		+ A topic that is currently creating some tension in the household:
		+ I need advice on:
3. Pass out **post-it notes** ( possibly in three different colors) and allow families 10 minutes (or so) to respond to the prompts by writing on the post-it notes. As they write their responses, ask them to post their responses on the appropriate flipchart under the corresponding prompt.
4. Review the responses, beginning with those related to how the students has grown or matured. It is not necessary to read every response out loud, but rather choose some highlights and ask people to share some of their experiences. After a 5-7 minute discussion on the positive behaviors, and move to the other two prompts.
5. Read some of the responses about tension in the household. Ask host families to elaborate as needed.
6. Facilitate a conversation where host families can share their challenges and can learn from each other on ways to solve these challenges. Keep the conversation open so host families can share problem-solving techniques with their peers. Ask participants questions such as:
* Has anyone else encountered this problem?
* How did you solve it?
* Any thoughts on what is the “root” cause of the tension?
* Does the Area Representative need to get involved?
1. Continue the conversation by looking at the “Advice” post-its. Use the same kinds of questions to elicit feedback and suggestions from the group. If these questions are not answered through the dialogue. Talk with an SSM about specific problems that may require additional support.

Wrap Up (2 minutes)

1. Explain that during this time of the exchange year, there are many emotions as students prepare to leave. In some cases, students act out as a way to handle their emotions.
2. Tell the host families that the next activity will focus on how YFU is supporting the students in saying goodbye.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Take a quick break (5-10 minutes) before moving into the next session, Goodbye Plan. Use this time to talk with families about other ways they can be involved with YFU.

Activity # 3 - The GoodByE Plan(35 minutes)

Introduction: Amelie’s Letter (5 MINUTES)

1. Tell the host families that they will now discuss some of information that the students are getting in their Re-Entry Orientation. Explain that this will help them support their student as he/she prepares for their departure.
2. Introduce the session by reading the following text from Amelie’s letter.

*When I was about to leave my home country to come to the States, I wasn't really scared. Sure, I was pretty excited and maybe a bit nervous, but never scared. But, when I had to leave my new found home-country, the US, I was scared out of my mind.*

*When I was leaving the US, I was freaked out with everything changing: me having to leave, having to decide which things I was gonna take with me, and how to say goodbye to certain people, friends, places and habits. You may not be experiencing the same thing. I remember hearing about situations and problems related to leaving, but, I was like "Well, no, I don't really think I am going through anything like this," and I hope you aren't going through any huge problems right now or when you arrive home; but realize that it will probably happen.*

3. Facilitate a brief conversation about the letter and ask host families about what they think their students are feeling as they prepare to leave. Use the following discussion questions or develop your own:

* What are some of the things that are “freaking” Amelie out? Why do you think this is stressful for her?
* Does your student have similar concerns? What do you think is freaking them out?
* Have you started to think about how your family will say goodbye? What might be important in this process and why?

Aspects of Goodbye (25 MINUTES)

**Facilitator note-** For this activity, make sure you have reviewed the Aspects of Goodbye handout and can provide examples that demonstrate the different stages.

1. Start this activity by making the following points:
* Saying goodbye is hard for everyone, host families and students.
* We are telling the students that feeling sad is an expected and natural reaction to saying goodbye to host families and friends.
* People react differently to saying goodbye.
* Common aspects, known as the Aspects of Goodbye include: denial, anger, bargaining, sadness/sorrow, and adjustment. These emotions are common when saying goodbye to someone. Often these are used to describe the grieving process, but we have found that people encounter the same kinds of thoughts and feelings when saying goodbye to loved ones.
* These thoughts and feelings happen to different people in different ways and at different times. We explain these stages to the students because by understanding these different aspects of goodbye, they are better prepared when saying goodbye.
* We also tell the students about defense mechanisms and highlight why it is important to deal with the actual feelings associated with saying goodbye, rather than use defense mechanisms.
1. Explain that now, they will do a similar activity that the students do in order to prepare them for the saying goodbye to their student and helping their family members say goodbye to their student.

DIRECTIONS FOR ASPECTS OF GOODBYE

1. Post the aspects of goodbye (denial, anger, bargaining, sadness/sorrow, and adjustment with short descriptions as most adults are familiar with these ideas) around the room. Read each flipchart aloud and provide information about possible student behaviors as they relate to this “aspect of goodbye”.
2. After presenting the flipchart, ask host families to think about their student’s recent behavior in relation to these stages, as well as how they are feeling (and any other family members, such as their other children in the household) about saying goodbye.
3. Ask host families to walk around and think about the different aspects of goodbye and their student. If they, themselves have been experiencing the stage as they are sad about the student leaving, **write HF** on the flip chart, for **Host family**. If they have **seen this behavior** in their **student,** indicate this with an **St** for student on the flip chart.
4. They have 10 minutes to walk around the room, read the different flipcharts and mark them according to their own feelings about the departure of their student, as well as how they perceive their student is feeling.
5. Following the 10 minute period, bring participants back together for a brief discussion about what behaviors host families are seeing in their students as they prepare to depart, as well as their own feelings about departure. Use these questions or develop your own:
* Was anyone surprised to realize that they are experiencing these different aspects of goodbye? What surprised you and why? (allow several people to share)
* Does anyone want to share an example of something that has happened that might be related to saying goodbye? (allow several people to share)
* What can we do to help saying goodbye be less difficult for the students and for each other? (answers will vary)
1. End the discussion with the following points, or develop similar points.
* One key strategy to make saying goodbye less difficult, especially for the students, is to understand and acknowledge that this is happening and talk about it with the student.
* We tell the students that by simply thinking about the goodbye process and being aware of all these emotions, they will be more likely to react in a positive way, rather than in a negative way.
* Over the next few weeks, remember that it is normal for you, your children, and your student to have many different feelings as saying goodbye can be very hard.

Tips for a Positive Goodbye

* Remind families to **put themselves in their students’ shoes** as everyone is sad about the departure and is going through a hard time.
* **Follow the rules**- We are asking the students to not challenge the rules that have been in place all year—both YFU and family rules. If they do, it could result in having you as their family lose trust in them and make you, the family feel as though the student feels they are no longer important and this can be devastating to everyone.
* **Balance time between family and friends**- Everyone needs to plan ahead and communicate plans clearly to everyone!
* **Tie up loose ends**! Be sure to have the student settle any outstanding bills and obtain school transcripts before they leave America.

Wrap Up: (5 minutes)

* Tell the families to read the Homework handout and read/discuss the handouts in order to have a conversation with their student about making concrete plans so that the goodbye will be a smooth, planned process.
* Remind the families that saying goodbye is difficult for everyone and that by talking with students about the orientation sessions, they are supporting the student through this process
* Remind the families that the Area Representatives and SSMs are also available to provide support.
* Tell the families, that they may now join the students in the final session of the day.

**Aspects of Goodbye**

***Some find that saying goodbye when a loved one departs has similar feelings to the stages of grief. Facilitators should be familiar with the ideas on how a student or family may handle their goodbye.***

**Denial**: You do not want to say goodbye. In fact, you pretend that it is not happening at all. You deny that that you are actually leaving. This is a defense mechanism that protects us from the shock, disappointment and sadness of this stage of the experience ending. We block out the reality and hide from the facts. This is a temporary response that carries us through the first wave of saying goodbye.

*Possible behaviors or actions: Not wanting to pack, not wanting to make arrangement to ship luggage home. Avoids discussion about plans for the airport. Does not make arrangements to say goodbye to important people. Today, one might be thinking: I don’t need this Re-Entry orientation.*

**Anger**: When you feel scared, nervous, anxious, and sad, you might deal with all of these emotions by being angry. Arguing, fighting, and being rebellious are all defense mechanisms. You are not ready to leave, and sometimes it is easier to be angry with people rather than looking at the real cause of the anger- which is actually sadness.

*Examples: Reacting impatiently to host family requests. Arguing with family and friends. Not wanting to listen to others. Being tempted to break rules. Easily frustrated and on edge.*

**Bargaining:** The normal reaction to feelings of helplessness or anxiety is often a need to regain control. This sometimes occurs by trying to “bargain” and change the situation.

*Example: Wanting to change your travel plans. Looking for ways to prolong the departure. Making plans that are not realistic- I will get a job this summer and stay in the States. If I get all As, I can I just stay and go to college here in the US.*

**Sadness/Sorrow:** Feeling of sadness and regret are a normal reaction to this stage of your exchange experience. These feelings can happen before or after you have left the US.

*Example: Not wanting to talk to anyone, isolating oneself. Staying away from friends and family, and just wanting to be alone.*

**Adjustment:** Let others be there for you and help comfort you through the process of saying goodbye. The best thing you can do is to allow yourself to feel the emotions as they come over you. Resisting it only will prolong the natural process of healing.

*Example: Make plans to continue interacting with the international students that you have met. Figure out ways to stay in touch with your American family and friends. Realize how much you have grown and recognize that this special experience will be with you forever.*