

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Student Debriefing

This guide is intended primarily as a conversation starter. The list below are recommended topics to cover when debriefing a TCK.

Planned OR unexpected exit from country

Current relationship with parents

Parent's current location

Favorite activities in host country

Host countries lived in

Most important traditions

Primary emotions around beginning university

Hobbies/skills/interests

Primary emotions around leaving host country

Romantic relationship status

Where are siblings living (if applicable)

Emotions/thoughts around being a TCK

Where are closest friends currently

Experience with American systems (banking, driving, medical care, etc.)

High school experience

What feels like home

Level of personal independence in your host country (ex. My friends and I would go everywhere by ourselves on public transit)

Goals for this season



# How to Mentor

## Recognizing Your Own Triggers

It is important to remember that it is often not possible to completely disconnect from your own emotions when you're having a conversation about someone else's experience. This is especially true if their experience has parallels to yours. While that empathy can be wonderful, it can also create a strong response that may be unhelpful to the situation. Be aware of the topics that may be difficult for you to engage in because you experienced something similar yourself. If one of those topics comes up, notice the emotional response you're feeling and consider whether your response is in alignment with what the situation calls for. If you know there is a topic that is too difficult for you to engage with, consider declining to mentor a TCK with that experience.

## A Mentor or Friend

Relationships take time and intentionality and this guide can be a helpful way to begin a relationship with a TCK. It is important however, that you define the relationship from the beginning as unclear intentions can result in unintentional hurt.

A mentorship is often one sided - the mentor is asking questions and advising the mentee but the mentor is not sharing their own personal information. If you desire to mentor the TCK, it is important to let them know that you would love to be their mentor as they enter this new experience and develop friendships.

A friendship, however, is two sided. For this reason, you may choose to use this guide as a conversation starter but then give your own answers to the questions. These conversations should then include a fairly equal amount of disclosure and vulnerability between you and the TCK.

## Validating Grief

It is likely that the conversations facilitated by debriefing will bring up grief and associated difficult emotions so it is important that the TCK feels you are an emotionally safe space to express those emotions. Sometimes grief is unintentionally invalidated by giving a "shut down" response and it can be difficult to continue the conversation after that response has been given. For this reason, focus on "safe space" responses. Responses and examples for each are below.



## SHUT DOWN RESPONSES

**DOWNPLAY** "It wasn't that big of a deal!"

**DEFEND** "That happened because..."

**COMPETE** "This was worse than that."

**CORRECT** "That's not what happened!"

## SAFE SPACE RESPONSES

**ACKNOWLEDGE** "Thank you for sharing that with me"

**AFFIRM** "It makes sense that you would feel that way."

**COMFORT** "You're not alone."

## Recognizing the Need for Outside Care

There are times when you encounter something that you are not equipped or qualified to deal with and it is important to know what to look for so that you can recommend professional care. It is recommended that you have a list of professional care resources available (for example, the school counselor's phone number). Here are some basic indicators that you need to refer the TCK to professional services:

- **Any mention of harm to self or others** - it is not your job to determine whether they are "serious" or not, it is your job to take them seriously and get help
- **Disclosure of a traumatic event** - if they mention a significant traumatic event and they have never had counseling or other services to process that event, encourage them to find a professional with whom they can process.
- **A visceral reaction** - if during a conversation around a particular topic, they experience a physical reaction such as a panic attack, extreme anger, excessive sweating, etc. do not continue engaging in that topic and instead recommend professional services.

# Conversation Guide

## Repatriation

How the TCK left their previous country significantly impacts how they arrive in university. If they had planned for a year to relocate and attend this school, their experience will be much different than if they were recently evacuated or left unexpectedly. It is also helpful to know how long they have been in the country. Have they been here for a year or did they arrive yesterday and are still jet lagged?

Use the following questions as a conversation guide to better understand their journey to where they are now.

- Had you planned to come to this school this year?
- When did you come back from overseas and what has it been like for you since you've been here?
- Did leaving your host country and coming here go as planned?
- What was it like leaving your host country? Did you have a chance to say "goodbye" well?

Notes:

# Conversation Guide

## Logistics

The level to which an incoming TCK has experience living independently in their passport country varies greatly. It is important for you to know the level of understanding and ability they have for each of the categories outlined below so that you can be a support to them or connect them with someone who can be.

### Transportation

- Do you have a drivers license?
- Do you have a vehicle here at school?
- If you need to go somewhere beyond walking distance how will you get there?

### Medical

- Do you know what to do if there's a medical emergency?
- Do you have health insurance?

### Banking

- Do you have a bank account?
- Do you know if your bank has a location nearby?

Notes:

# Conversation Guide

## Family

It is helpful to understand a TCK's family dynamics and how those might continue in these university years. This can help you to assess how much support the TCK may need. Consider keeping a list of TCKs who do not have their immediate family nearby so that you can proactively ensure they have somewhere to go for holidays, help moving out of their dorm, an older adult they can call if they need something, etc. If the TCK expresses that they are very close with their family members, spend some time giving them space to process their emotions around not being near them.

Use the following questions as a conversation guide.

- **Where are your parents living?**
- **Do you have siblings and if so, where are they living?**
- **Where are you in the birth order?**
- **Are you close with your parents or any of your siblings? If so, how do you plan to maintain those connections while you're here?**
- **How often do you plan to visit your family members?**
- **Do you think you'll be with your family during holidays? If not, do you know where you'll go?**

Notes:

# Conversation Guide

## Friends

It is helpful to understand the TCK's relationships and how those have impacted them. You also want to begin to get a feel for how they build friendships so that you can help them to connect them with potential friends. It can be helpful to know if they prefer one-on-one connection over large groups so that you know how to best engage them and, for example, don't think they are uninterested in friendship just because they're not attending any of the group events you've invited them to!

Use the following questions as a conversation guide.

- **What were your friendships like in high school? Did you have a group of friends or a couple of close friends?**
- **Who are some of your closest friends and where are they now?**
- **What are some things that you did with your friends?**
- **What are your biggest concerns about making friends here?**
- **What do you look for in a friend?**
- **Do you take a while to warm up with new people or do you tend to jump right in?**
- **Would you rather go to a party and meet a lot of people or go to a quiet coffee shop to get to know a new friend?**

Notes:

# Conversation Guide

## Hobbies/Interests

It can be a loss to leave hobbies and interests behind when entering university. If possible, find ways for the TCK to engage in what they love! By learning about their interests, you can connect them with clubs, others who have similar interests, or even create an event around that hobby. For example, perhaps you find out they play guitar and so you set up a "Jam Night" where you invite everyone to bring an instrument and make music together!

Use the following questions as a conversation guide.

- Were you a part of any sports, clubs, or groups in high school?
- What do you do when you have a free day all to yourself?
- What would your friends say you are good at?
- What is a stress-relieving activity for you?
- What hobbies or interests do you spend your time on?
- Are there any clubs that you know you're interested in joining here?
- What activities make you smile?

Notes:

# Conversation Guide

## Goals

It can be helpful to hear what the TCK's goals and desires are for this season of their life. The answer to this may determine what you decide to suggest to them as far as events, groups, etc.

Use the following questions as a conversation guide.

- **What are your academic goals for university?**
- **What are some other desires or goals that you have for this season of your life?**
- **Are there any goals that you're concerned about meeting?**
- **What are you most looking forward to about being here?**
- **How can we help you to meet your goals?**

Notes:

# Conversation Guide

## Emotions

It is helpful to get an emotional pulse on the TCK, but this can only happen when relationship is built. Hopefully the previous conversations using this guide have allowed you and the TCK to build a safe, trusting relationship. Once that has happened, use these questions to go a bit deeper in helping them process their transition into university life.

Use the following questions as a conversation guide.

- What has been the hardest thing for you so far about being here? What has been the best thing?
- What is something that you're missing right now?
- How does it feel to think about being here for x amount of time?
- How has being a TCK influenced your experience here so far?
- What are some practical things that you could do to make this place feel more homey? (think about smells, foods, tactile elements such as blankets, sounds, etc.)
- What do you hope improves in the coming months?
- What are you most looking forward to during this season?

Notes: