

## Leaving Well – Arriving Well

As you're preparing to move overseas, there are some key things you can do to make your transition go all that more smoothly. It's often difficult in the midst of packing, selling, arranging for storage, to think of intangible things like putting closure on ordinary aspects of your life. But now is the time. All of us have traveled through what you're about to embark on and we have a few suggestions for you **before** you pack up.



### Scrapbook

Have your kids collect photos of friends and family, postcards of local places, flyers for favorite restaurants or entertainment spots, stickers from favorite shops, etc. Collect visual reminders of where you're currently living. Put them together in a colorful booklet or scrapbook. Not only will this serve as a soothing reminder of the place you'll soon miss, but will be a great introduction for new friends to enjoy and learn more about you.

*“When our family left Brazil, three of our closest friends and their families threw a going away party for us. As they prepared for the party, they collected pictures of memorable things we did together (Halloween parade, trip to the beach, hours spent at the playground, etc.). Each family contributed several pages of pictures, stories, and poems written to and about us and created a spiral-bound memory book. At the going away party, they took more snapshots and then had each of the children hand-print the cover with colorful paint. Then they laminated the pages so our kids wouldn't love the pages to pieces! It was a wonderful gift!”*

### Stamped and Signed T-shirts

FamilyFun magazine had a great idea for creating a “friends T-shirt.” Get a plain light-colored T-shirt. Cut a potato in half and use one half as an oval-shaped stamp. Dip the smooth side into some fabric paint and stamp “faces” onto the T-shirt. Let your kids and their friends decorate the “faces” with fabric paint and/or markers to look like themselves. Have each child write his/her name under the corresponding “face.”

Here at Dalat, when kids are preparing to move away, we have their classmates and friends sign a school T-shirt with colorful laundry markers. It makes for a nice going away gift.

*“Before the end of the school year, I went into my kids' classrooms to decorate T-shirts as keepsakes of their friends in Brazil. I got a light-colored T-shirt, took a digital photo of their class and had it made into an iron-on. Since the kids were young, I had each classmate hand print the T-shirt with colorful fabric paint. Then I wrote each kid's name under his/her handprint with a laundry marker. My kids love their T-shirts and their friends thought it was so much fun!”*



### Mini Photo Album

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If you plan to store your photo albums, remove recent pictures of all your relatives and close friends. Buy a small album to put them in. This will be a tangible, visual reminder of people you love as you're going through the adjustment process. It's also nice to show to your new friends who you're connected to "back home."

*"We created a little photo album of pictures of family so that our young children would have frequent reminders of who's who before returning for home leave. It would even help visualize who was on the phone when a relative called long distance. By having pictures, there's never a doubt who's Auntie Jenn and who's Nana!"*

### Take a Tour

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Drive around to the important areas of your neighborhood and city. Make plans to eat at favorite restaurants, shop at favorite malls, and even do a little sight-seeing to help "photograph" your home in your mind. We often get too busy in the moving process that we skip this part. When we finally arrive at our destination, physically and emotionally exhausted, we mourn not having enjoyed home with all its 'specialness' and uniqueness.

### Saying "Good-bye"

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We need closure on all aspects of our lives. It's obvious that we will make the effort and say the emotional farewell to family and close friends. However, we need to say a verbal "good-bye" to **all** things in our lives. It may seem kind of silly, but try it. Say "good-bye" to your bedroom, your kitchen, your house, your car, your office at work, your church, etc. Say "good-bye" to the dishes you're putting in storage, that beautiful couch you can't part with, the piles of books that didn't fit in your luggage. Say "good-bye" to the doctor, dentist, mechanic, your favorite cashier at your local grocery store, waiters at your beloved restaurant, etc. Let people know you're moving and that all aspects of your current life are important and will be missed to some degree. Not only does it help others prepare for your departure, it gets **you** moving in that direction and the actual move will seem less abrupt.

### Farewell Party

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Allow your friends to throw you a farewell party. If they don't, consider hosting your own. *"A family who received short notice for a move to Argentina threw their own party. They ordered subway sandwiches, posted pictures of their kids with neighborhood friends and created for themselves a wonderful opportunity to say good-bye to different people in their lives all at once. When the mother came back to visit one year later, she said that it was the single most important thing she ever did in all their years of living and moving overseas."*

### Books

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As you prepare to enter a new time and place in your lives, consider doing a little "homework" in advance. It's difficult to do when you're so busy, but a little will go a long way in demystifying this place.

Read through some books together as a family. "Peanut Butter Friends in a Chop Suey World" by Deb Brammer is recommended by Pre-Field Orientation. It is available through Christianbook.com for US\$4.95

([http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?item\\_no=0847517&p=1010575](http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?item_no=0847517&p=1010575)). "Footsteps Around the World – Relocation Tips for Teens," by Beverly Roman, is a journaling workbook that we **highly recommend**. It is available through BR Anchor Publishing (<http://www.branchor.com>, phone 800-727-7691). You could also check out "Culture Shock! Malaysia" which can be purchased through Amazon.com and Walmart.com. There is also a kids' edition.

## Internet Sites

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Check out some Internet sites on culture and customs of Malaysia. Surf around looking at pictures and maps. Take a look at the school's website. You can use these sites to show your friends and your kids can use them at school. Here's a few to get you started:

<http://dalat.org>

<http://www.interknowledge.com/malaysia/>

<http://www.visitmalaysia.com/penang.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/Cabana/9929/penang.html>

## Correspond

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Write us. The school's counseling office has arranged for students to begin e-mailing your kids before they arrive. There's a Welcoming Committee ready to help you. You'll soon be hearing from the committee. Ask lots of questions. Give us the opportunity to get to know you a little as well.

## "Homework"

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Try this little exercise with your family. Sit down and read through it together, answering the questions in the spaces provided.



**EXIT RIGHT → ENTER RIGHT**

The well-known speaker on Third Culture Kids (TCK) issues and transition, David Pollock, of Interaction Inc., makes the following suggestions:

1. Build a RAFT to help you in the leave-taking process

**R**econciliation - resolve interpersonal conflict

**A**ffirmation - express appreciation for relationships and experiences

**F**arewells - say clear good-byes to people, places, possessions, even pets

**T**hink destination - check to be sure your expectations are realistic, neither overly positive or negative

2. Gather information about where you're moving to. Helps you be a little more prepared mentally and emotionally.
3. Remember that when you begin disengaging with friends and activities, they'll begin disengaging with you too. You may feel some rejection, resentment, sadness and/or guilt. Realize this is normal.



**An important contributor to successful reentry adjustment is working at restoring broken relationships and bringing unfinished business to a close.**

"If you go away from a place without saying good-bye to it – not just to people, but to the place itself – you'll carry this strange anchor behind you. You can't say good hellos if you haven't said good good-byes (Pollock 1989)."

There are some common challenges that come with leave-taking (Pollock 1997). Be aware of the "quick release" response. You can experience a feeling of disengagement earlier than the actual departure. If you begin pulling away too early, you'll regret it. Be careful not to miss present relationships and enjoy the time you do have.

Adequate farewells are an important part of leave-taking and preparing for moving to a new place. Saying good-bye to people and places (yes, even verbally saying good-bye to places!) helps create a smoother conclusion (Pollock, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 1987).

Think about your life where you're currently living. In order to plan for closure, you need to answer a few questions. Who are the people who have been important to you?

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What places have had special meaning?

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What activities have you enjoyed most?

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Now that you've identified meaningful people, places and activities, you can decide how you want to bring about closure. For each one, decide how, when, and where you'll say goodbye. Don't forget to include ordinary everyday things because you'll miss those too.

What are some ordinary things you do and places you go that you may miss when you leave? \_\_\_\_\_

Now decide how you're going to say good-bye. (Don't forget to include pets if you have any.)  
People (how/when/where/with whom):

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Places (how/when/where/with whom):

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Possessions (how/when/where/with whom):

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Activities (how/when/where/with whom):

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Fill in the blanks. *Before I leave . . .*

- I want to go to \_\_\_\_\_ one more time.
- I want to buy \_\_\_\_\_ to take with me.
- I want to take pictures of \_\_\_\_\_.
- I want to apologize to \_\_\_\_\_.

- I want to thank \_\_\_\_\_.

Now talk about the ideas you wrote down as a family. Hearing someone else's responses may trigger new thoughts and ideas. You may even surprise yourselves and enjoy it!