** Unpacking the Experience**

**Coping, Adjusting, and Getting Involved**

Many of the feelings you may experience stem from the changes you have experiences and the ambiguity of how the new, changed you will fit into your old life back at home. It’s important to remember that change is a positive thing. You have new ideas and insights giving you a better sense of yourself. The trick is to figure out how to incorporate your new perspectives into your life at home or on your home campus. There are several things you can do to feel comfortable one again in the U.S. while still retaining new knowledge and perspectives. First, don’t consider study abroad a singular experience; instead, look at it as the start of a lifetime of international experiences. Second, find ways to continue pursuing newfound interests. Make the most of the resources that exists for you on your home campus and in your local community.

**Here are a few ideas:**

* Take a language class to maintain your proficiency
* Participate in a language table where people join to dine and converse in a foreign language. Start a new language group!
* Become a tutor for students who need help in beginning or intermediate language courses.
* Attend presentations, lectures and events on international affairs
* If your campus has a program, apply to be a study abroad peer advisor or an orientation leader for new international students coming to study abroad at your campus.
* Help your study abroad office recruit and prepare new study abroad students by assisting at the pre-departure orientation or study abroad fair.

Adapted from: Mikk et al. (2009). *Maximizing Study Abroad: An Instructional Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use.* Minneapolis, MI: Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), University of Minnesota.

* Join a student group with an international focus (International Club, Heritage Club, Council of International Student Affairs)
* Submit your photos and videos from abroad to the AHA Photo or Video Contest.
* Submit original writing you did while abroad to be published in your campus or community newspapers or to national magazines
* Complete the AHA program evaluation and the returnee survey on your campus. Your thoughts about your program and site are very important and your comments will help students trying to select a program.
* Attend the annual AHA Conference for Returnees.
* Rekindle the spirit of adventure you had abroad- explore home!