

ReEntry 101 - Photos!
*Adapted from Rich Kurtzman, Barcelona Study Abroad Experience
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PURPOSE:

Reviewing one's photos after returning can sting a bit, especially when they only amplify your desire to return to your host country. Even so, doing so curbs returners' tendency to "shoebox" or compartmentalize their study away experience. Circumventing re-entry shock is often accomplished by framing one's time abroad as separate from "real life", and while holding onto such a philosophy can initially dull the discomfort of returning home, it can also keep a sojourner from completely honoring their experience.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Exercise 1: Pecha-Kucha

Find 20 different photos that describe different aspects of your experience abroad and put them together to tell a complete (or as complete as possible) story of your time away. There's a kicker though: the resulting story can be no longer than 5 minutes. If possible, find others sojourners to complete the exercise as well so everyone has a chance to tell their story.

Exercise 2: Desktop Reminiscing

If you have a laptop or computer available, choose a photo from your time abroad to use as your "desktop image". After a week, swap this photo for a different one from your album. NOTE: some computers will automatically rotate desktop photos if you choose this setting.

Exercise 3: Yearly Memories

Once you've been home for at least a year, limit your browsing to photos that you took a year ago on that same day. For example, if today was January 29th, 2014, I would look back at any photos I took on January 29th, 2013 from when I was abroad.

DEBRIEF:

Our hope is that these exercises might bring, among other things, a smile to your face. Yes, while these photos cannot transport you back in time, they can serve as reminder that this experience is not separate from your life, but rather a very real part of it.