



Taking the Experience Home

Managing the post experience emotional roller coaster

Initial Responses to the Experience

Emotional High—It will seem so great! The group will be ecstatic!

Depression—Group members will be lonely and miss the community and simplicity of the experience.

Guilt— Group members will feel like they need to do more things at home.

It has been said the God did not make us for the “mountain top” experiences. He uses these experiences to encourage us, teach us, and fuel us for living a faithful, everyday life...a life that takes place in the valley below. As you return home, consider carefully how you can perpetuate your group’s growth as you descend the mountain to your hometown. The ultimate success of your mission or wilderness experience might be measured by the lasting effects—one, two, or even six months down the road—from your group’s experience.

Reflect on the Experience

Your group members need to honestly evaluate and think through their experience. They need to debrief it and analyze what occurred. Consider questions like:

- What was the best thing about the experience? Why?
- What stretched me the most on the experience?
- How am I different than when I began the experience?
- What are one or two things I learned that I don’t want to forget? How can I keep learning from my experience at ASM?
- In light of our collective experience, what are your thoughts on our community and our group in general?

The idea is to apply the experiences you had at ASM to your daily lives, not just to reminisce. Remembering is fine, but unless it helps you to grow, it can be exclusive and harmful.

Share the Experience

The trip participants need to tell others about what occurred. This should be done with the whole congregation (a report or a whole service about the experience). This service could include testimonies, singing, slides, anecdotes, etc. from the trip. You can put music and interviews together and play them as you present the slide show. This report to the church could also be a newsletter or project report with short written thoughts from each of the participants.

No matter how you choose to do it the experience should be shared with others including other members of the group who were not able to go to on the trip. Note that your group may feel divided—those that went and those that didn't. The group that went to ASM will need to consciously try to pull the others into their new friendships and community. This can occur by teaching the games/songs etc. which the group enjoyed at ASM.

Keep in Contact

Write a letter to people who you spent time with during your experience. Your homeowners, service organizations, and ASM love to hear stories from your time spent with us. Or send them some photos from your trip. Let us know if you need an address!

Serve Locally

Brainstorm with your whole group (even those who were not able to go on the ASM experience) about things that they can do as a group in your own community. Take the suggestions seriously and actually begin to do some of them as group projects or outings. Try to harness the momentum and natural energy of the group while they are still excited about the experience. Following are some suggestions your group may come up with:

- Paint/repair/weatherize older folks houses in the church.
- Mow lawns, shovel driveways, rake, etc. for the elderly/disabled/widowed.
- Plan a Saturday day camp for all the church children.
- Visit the shut-ins and volunteer to do work for them.
- Visit a local handicapped center.
- Do a local mini work project in a poor section of town.
- Put on a day camp at a local park on one Saturday.
- Do a fund raising drive and donate the proceeds to the poor.
- Help with church maintenance.
- Visit a mission, volunteer to help.

Incorporate New Leadership Development Techniques You Have Learned

Chances are that you, the group leader, returned from ASM with a few new "tricks" in your bag. Why not implement some of ASM's philosophy to enhance your regular group activities.

- Let the group take more ownership of the group...Show, help, let model of leadership development.
- Experiential education...Use initiatives, games, and teachable moments to illustrate your Biblical teaching.
- Plan activities that push the group into the "not so comfortable" yellow zone.
- Develop a group covenant and review it regularly.
- Use consensus decision making, when appropriate.
- Incorporate debriefing times following strategically planned activities.
- Implement different styles of worship and integrate the disciplines you may have touched on.

If you have questions regarding the application of ASM's activities or about helpful resources, consult our website, e-mail us, or contact our office at 800-884-8483.