



## YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING Intercultural Exchange Programs

### NOVEMBER SUPPORT TIPS

Most of your students and host families are already into their third month of exchange and the adjustment cycle continues to change with the seasons. As you help your YFU students prepare for the holidays, encourage them to talk about and share the holiday traditions of their natural family and country.

November is the month of giving thanks. YFU wants to take a moment and say “Thank you for the work you do!!” YFU could not exist without volunteers like yourself!

#### SUPPORT TIPS

##### HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

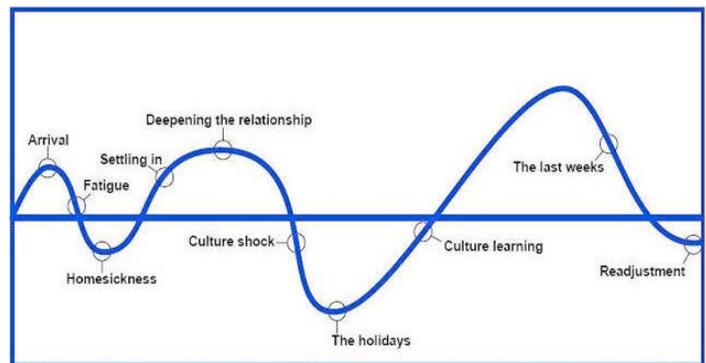
Thanksgiving is a great opportunity for students to show gratitude and appreciation! Encourage students to learn about Thanksgiving traditions. Provide low cost, simple ideas for ways to show “thankfulness” for their host family, school and community. This will be a new holiday for most of your students, be prepared to explain it to them.

##### PROMOTE THE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

YFU is focused on growing our Study Abroad program, and we need your help. One of the strongest ambassadors of YFU’s programs are our International Students. Please encourage your students to talk to their friends and give a presentation in their class about how their American peers can also become an exchange student. Usually foreign language teachers and Social Studies classes are very open to this type of presentation. We have a **Presentation Packet** already created to assist them. Please contact the Study Abroad team with any questions at 1.800.TEENAGE or [admissions@yfu.org](mailto:admissions@yfu.org).

##### CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

For students and host families, the honeymoon has ended and they are experiencing the day to day reality of life in the U.S. Exchange students experience many highs and lows during the year. Most students experience the adjustment curve below, though some experience a curve that doesn’t dip or rise too much. Nearly all students experience some stronger emotions around the holiday season. Talk about holiday plans and concerns with students, and remind them that some homesickness is normal. Contact your SSM, if you have any concerns about your student’s mood.



##### INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

**International Education week (IEW)** kicks-off the week of November 17! IEW aims to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. Encourage your students and host families to take part in the celebration. Let us know at [marketing@yfu.org](mailto:marketing@yfu.org) if you have any plans for IEW! If a school prefers to schedule this outside of IEW, that works too! **Click here** for a number of promotional materials to help you celebrate IEW.

##### SCHEDULE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

This month and next will be busy with holiday activities. Consider setting contact dates with your student and host family in advance. Make your contacts early in the month, to avoid reminders and give yourself time to make multiple attempts. Also, scheduling the following months’ contact while you are already on the phone with them will help prevent the stress of unanswered phone calls.

##### MONTHLY CONTACT - TRY, TRY AGAIN!

Sometimes, reaching students and host families to complete monthly contacts can be frustrating! If you are unable to reach your student for your monthly contact requirement, as the saying goes, try, try again! YFU commits to connecting

with our students each month to know how they are doing.

If you have not been able to reach a student or host family, and/or if the telephone number or email for a student or host family does not seem to be working, follow the required protocol:

- If contact is not made after 4 days of your initial attempt, begin trying multiple contact methods (if you have not already done so). Text, call alternative phone numbers, email, Facebook, contact the high school and/or go visit the host family residence.
- After one week of trying, report the issue to your SSM for help. Be aware, the SSM might continue to ask for your assistance in re-establishing contact.

The U.S. Department of State requires YFU to actually communicate with every student every month.

### LEARNING BY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The third month of exchange is a time when students' relationships begin to deepen; they stop being a "guest" and become part of the family. It is through these relationships that exchange students learn about their new culture. Students and host families begin to realize that the cultural adjustment that they are both going through is not something that needs to be fixed, but rather an essential part of the exchange experience. They are able to relax and enjoy their growing friendships, helping the student to adapt and avoid feelings of isolation.

Three areas of cultural adjustment that exchange students commonly experience:

- The loss of familiar people, routines and surroundings. By the third month most feelings of loss have lessened because exchange students have developed new relationships and routines and are becoming more familiar and comfortable with their surroundings.
- The sense of inadequacy because of an inability to communicate. Students are likely to fumble in English which may make them feel silly or embarrassed. This can be unnerving, but it's important to be able to laugh at one's mistakes and to learn from them.
- Dealing with differences in values, attitudes, and beliefs. Keeping an open mind about host country behaviors and beliefs and understanding them within a cultural context helps students learn and grow.

Most of these stages repeat throughout the year. Once a student has become comfortable in the culture, new challenges arise, putting them through the stages all over again. Keep these adjustments in mind as you help guide students and host families through their experience.

### LOST INSURANCE CARDS

If one of your students loses an insurance or YFU ID card, you can help them order a replacement. Go to the student's profile in [my.yfu.org](http://my.yfu.org), click on the 'placement' link, and then click 'Reprint ID' in the bottom right box titled "ID card". It may take up to 2 weeks to receive the reprinted card. Please review the [Lost Insurance Card document](#).

## ADMINISTRATIVE

### SUPPORT SKILLS FOR AREA REPS

**Register today** for more training as an Area Rep. New Area Reps need to make sure to participate in Support Skills B and for returning Area Reps Support Skills C is a great continuation of training.

### HOLIDAY TRAVEL REMINDERS

It's the holiday season, which means many host families will be traveling in the coming months. Make sure to review the YFU USA **permission to travel policy and form** with your host families. Remind them to send in the permission form by fax to 202.558.7570, of any travel away from the host home that exceeds 2 days, at least two weeks prior to the departure date.

### YOUR TRAVEL PLANS

As many host families travel during the holiday season, so too might you. If you will be traveling for an extended period, please let YFU and your students and host families know you will be away, so we all know who to contact while you are gone.

### POST-ARRIVAL ORIENTATIONS

All students should have completed a Post-Arrival Orientation. For any student who did not attend his or her Post-Arrival Orientation, we ask the Area Rep to conduct a one-on-one orientation. This orientation is required for YFU to remain in compliance with Department of State regulations, particularly the **Individual Orientation Reporting Form** (located on the Orientations page of [my.yfu.org](http://my.yfu.org)) to your District Office.

## WELCOME/ARRIVAL HOST FAMILIES

If you still have students in arrival families, make sure you keep the families and students in the loop about what YFU is doing to find a permanent family for the exchange student.

Also, keep these adjustments, listed below, in mind as you help guide students and host families through their experience. Moving from familiar surroundings to a new, unknown environment creates new challenges. Students who have recently switched families are highly prone or likely to repeat many of the stages of adjustment.

## BELO TRIPS

It is time already for students to start thinking about if they would like to participate on a YFU organized trip through Belo: [belousa.com](http://belousa.com). Students can look up available trips by logging-in to this site, selecting their District on the left, and then selecting the trip on the left. \* Important note - some districts might not be offering Belo trips, so please ask your Field Director's first.

Please pass this login information to students:

**Login** YFU

**Password** ADVENTURE

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

### FOR STUDENTS

#### Do you know what your Thanksgiving plans are?

Students may be feeling anxious about the holidays, and knowledge is power. The more they know early on about their host family's – and thus their own – plans for the holidays, the easier and more fun this season will be for them. Also, make sure that students know that visits by Natural Parents should not occur until later in the program (May or later), as these visits interrupt the adjustment process, making it more difficult for the student, and potentially creating an awkward situation between the student and both families.

#### How is school, classes? How were your mid-term grades?

It's important that students feel supported by their host family and Area Reps when they are struggling in school. Remind students that YFU wants them to try their best in school and to maintain at least a C average. Ask your student what YFU can do to help them maintain this level of achievement. Is the host family aware of the struggles? Has the student spoken to a teacher or a counselor at school? Can you help him/her speak to an appropriate staff person at school?

#### Have there been any major changes in your host home since you moved in? Has anyone in your host family moved in or out?

It is not always evident to YFU when a hosting situation has changed. However, it is important that we stay informed of any significant household changes for the safety and well being of all of our students. Has anyone in the family changed jobs, lost jobs, changed schedules?

#### How do you feel about your English skills? How much can you understand what your host family/teachers/friends say? Can you read your textbooks?

We brought this question up in September, but it is important to check in and see how students are progressing. If the student seems to be really struggling, give your student a [language assessment](#). If it reveals that your student needs additional language learning support, contact your Support Services Manager. YFU offers three language support options: tutoring, Rosetta Stone and the Oxford Picture Dictionary. [Click here](#) for more information on each of these.

## FOR FAMILIES

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### **What are your holiday plans?**

It can be helpful during this conversation to be familiar with YFU's stance regarding holiday plans and expenses. The holidays can be an emotional time for students who are living away from home. For that reason, host families should talk with their students very early on about what the family's holiday plans are. If a family's holiday plans include travel, they should consider who will pay for airline tickets and other expenses. Students' budgets cannot always afford this, but students should not be left behind. If a family is traveling for more than two days, they must fill out a permission to travel form which can be found on [my.yfu.org](http://my.yfu.org).

### **Do you know how your student is doing at school?**

With mid-term grades out, remind host families that YFU is more concerned with the full exchange experience than having a straight A report card. A student who is engaged with their community and host family and accomplishing a C average or better is considered successful. Academically speaking, YFU is more concerned with a student's effort than his/her grades in the initial periods of adjustment. Get information about any policy about grades at student's school, and help students achieve what his/her school requires of all its students.

### **How frequently do you have conversations with your student about their transition?**

When a host family acknowledges to their student that the family understands s/he is continually going through challenges – both large and small– it reassures the student that their host family has a sense of the numerous adjustments s/he is making every day. This can be comforting. It could be helpful for host family members to think about a move or other challenge that they had and recall some of the discomforts it caused.

### **Has your student shown signs of homesickness or culture shock?**

Inform your host family that the holidays are a prime time for homesickness. Often exchange students get swept up in their host family's traditions and begin missing their traditions from home. Your host family can help their exchange student through the holiday blues by encouraging them to share the holiday traditions of their country. Also, preparing special foods and sharing traditions gives students the opportunity to show gratitude to their host family. Remind your host family, if their student is feeling homesick, that it is not reflective of his or her feelings towards his or her host family.

If you have any questions about Monthly Contacts, **please contact your Support Service Manager!**