

CLOSURE – BUILDING A “RAFT”

Proper farewells are a vital part of keeping bitterness from occurring. David Pollock in his article “*Exit Right – Enter Right*” lists the following pre-departure elements as critical to good adjustment.

1. Reconciliation. One of the big causes of bitterness is “unfinished business”. It’s so easy to get on a plane and leave without ever asking for forgiveness or giving forgiveness. We need to make sure that we’ve straightened out any broken relationships that may exist, before leaving.

2. Affirmation. It’s so important to thank, encourage, affirm and commend those who have had a significant part of our lives. It not only is affirming to the one who receives the note or word of thanks, but it helps to cement some of the good memories that we experienced overseas.

These first two elements are ones that I encourage you to deal with as soon as possible, before it’s too late. It’s tempting to put those elements off until later. Unfortunately later often never comes.

3. Farewells. As obvious as it may seem, we often neglect the importance and health of saying good-bye. We need to make sure that we say our proper good-byes, not just to people, but to places, pets and possessions.

Unfortunately those who face evacuation, or an emergency medical or family leave often find this step impossible to do. When this step is

short-circuited an extra amount of attention needs to be given, to make sure that we’re dealing with the issues and grieve the losses that have taken place.

4. Think Ahead. So often we go into new situations, like returning to the States, either for furlough or permanently and never once stop to think through what we expect life, future assignment, friends, etc. to be like. Those of who have been in the host country for a short period of time in particular, often falsely assume everything is going to be the same when they return.

We need to talk about what kind of expectations we have. So often the first response is “I don’t have any”, but if we’re willing to think and continue discussing leaving, eventually things will come to mind. At that point we need process to our expectations...if possible with the help of others. Questions to ask: Are they realistic? Are the too high? Are they too low?