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**Caring for Your Missionary for the Long Term**

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For the sake of this article, let’s assume you have returned from an incredible short-term assignment.  One of the great parts of that was the relationship you developed with one (or more) of the missionaries who were working there.  What made it even more special is that you were able to develop a close, transparent relationship with them where you both ministered to each other and you have come back “here” with a burden to keep the relationship going somehow...so, now what?  Could you stay in contact?  Yes!  Should you stay in contact?  Maybe!

Here are 7 thoughts on how to continue a supportive relationship with this new missionary friend in order to help them continue their calling to and effectiveness in missions.

1. **Be discreet back home!**  Chances are personal information about life; strengths and struggles were shared by both of you.  This was done in the context of a personal and private relationship.  You can destroy that by sharing widely any personal information.  Being discreet means not sharing anything about them that is personal unless you have permission.  Before you communicate with others back home, an email to the missionary asking about how and what you should share would be appreciated.  It’s their stuff, after all!
2. **Take note of their timeline.**  Seek to understand where they are with their family (single, married, young kids, etc.) and what they will do over the next year or two (assume different role on the missions team, furlough, etc.).  Not only will this help you to pray specifically, but also it will come in handy on number four below. It really impresses people and makes them feel even cared for and supported if you remember details.
3. **Commit to praying with and for them.**  You will have the opportunity to visualize what their life is like because you were there.  You can pray for specifics that others in their support network have not seen or experienced.  I pray for specific events my missionaries experience and for the people they meet on a daily basis because I remember them from my visits. I also ask the missionaries for specific names or circumstances I can remember in prayer.
4. **Remember their milestones.**  When are birthdays, anniversaries, and other celebrations?  It would be awesome to surprise them with a post or email on their special day.
5. **Connect them to other networks.**  They may have limited time to surf the Internet.  You might be able to help them keep up with trends they might otherwise miss.  You can find out what their interests are and supply them with information about that interest.
6. **Expand their prayer network.**  You know more about them and their location than most.  Use that knowledge to educate and inform your friends about local situations, especially in times of crisis.  You will be able to marshal many people in times of need.
7. **Communicate and encourage.**  Yeah, that is what one through six are all about.  Keep communicating, but don’t do so with the expectation that they will respond to everything you write or do.  It is not all about you but it is about them making God’s glory known to the nations!

So, back to now what?  Could you stay in contact with these new missionary friends?  Yes!  This could be the continuation of a great relationship where you can support, but also continue learning.  Should you stay in contact with them?  Maybe!  By that I mean that they need an opportunity to say, “Sure,” or “No, thanks.”  It is a two way street!  Have fun!