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INTERACTING WITH YOUR INTERNATIONAL FRIEND INFO SHEET

IN PREPARATION FOR MEETING YOUR STUDENT

1. Try to ensure that your motive is true, unconditional love.
2. Read something about his/her country (if known) before your meeting, so that you can ask informed questions. If possible, have a

   map of the world or of his/her country so your new friend can explain where he/she lives and what his/her country is like.
3. Pray that God would prepare the heart of the one(s) He has sent to you.

DURING YOUR FIRST MEETING

1. Pray to overcome any nervousness. If you relax, this will help them, especially if it's their first time to visit "intensively" with a US American. They may be subdued in order to be certain they don't do anything to offend you. They may be nervous. It helps if you smile!
2. Take the time to learn their name in their own language even if they have an English nickname. It is a real compliment to them for you to take the time to learn their name. If necessary, write it down phonetically. Teach them your name and names of other family members. It may also be difficult to learn your name. Be patient. Tell them what you want to be called, e.g., Mr. or Mrs. or first name.
3. Listen as well as talk. Speak slowly (but not loudly!) and clearly as you assess the student's level of English. Try to draw them out. Sometimes the student will be so unsure of their English that they will answer in monosyllables, or in very short phrases. This puts the burden of conversation on you, and can be very wearing! Assure the student that you want to help them with English, so they need to converse. Naturally, you will not want to correct every error, but often it is unthreatening if you just repeat what they said, but with correct English. (Example: "I want to know is, where is the shopping." "Do you want to know where you can go shopping?")
4. Things to talk about – their family, parents, home country, schooling, major, ambitions, future plans, themselves. Be sure to let them ask questions, too. If the student is comfortable with it, discuss what you can do for them in this relationship. If they are unsure, then just arrange to meet again – eventually this will become clear.
5. Avoid "U.S. is best" attitude. Be realistic and willing to listen objectively to their reactions to U.S. American life, government, customs, etc. Keep cool; if they are critical

of the U.S., they are not insulting you. Such discussion is their way of learning and of maintaining their own national ties.

6. Other Topics: They may ask personal things that are socially acceptable in their culture, but not for ours, such as your age, income, weight, family, parents, etc. In many cultures, these are socially polite questions, so that they can find their position in how to respect you. Don't be offended. Answer: “Okay,” “Plenty,” “Enough,” “Fine.” On the other hand, they may have a natural reserve about answering questions that would seem very normal to us, so don’t be bothered if they answer “Okay,” “Plenty,” “Enough,” or “Fine”!
7. Learn a phrase in their language, such as, “Hello, how are you?” Write it phonetically and practice it, so that you can surprise them with it on your next meeting.

IF YOU DECIDE TO INVITE THEM TO YOUR HOME

1. Don't feel that you need to specially clean your house or prepare a special meal. (Something simple will be fine.) If you focus on the relationship – especially communicating interest in the student’s life – both of you will be more relaxed. By focusing on your new friend, you will avoid finding the relationship burdensome to you because it creates a lot of extra work. Students are not coming to look at how clean your house is and they probably don’t know what the food should taste like.

2. When you get home, give them a tour around your home. Many may not have been inside a U.S. American home before. Don’t patronize or apologize. If they are staying overnight, let them know where they will sleep. Pull the cover down so they understand to sleep between the sheets. Don’t assume anything. Show them where the light switch is for the bathroom. Show them how the faucets work or the shower curtain, etc. If you are concerned that you are coming across as patronizing, simply ask if they have been in a US American (or Western European) home before, and are familiar with these things.
3. When you serve food: rice, chicken, vegetables, salad or stew is a safe menu. One consideration is no pork for Jews or Muslims or Hindus. Some Hindus (or others) are vegetarians. For dessert, fruit and ice cream are good choices. When you pray before meals, it may be a new custom to some. Simply say, “We are Christians. It is our family custom to give thanks to God before we eat.” They are usually grateful if you pray for them and their families separated from them back home.
4. Make sure they understand. Their “yes” is not always our “yes.” They sometimes say yes to please you or not to trouble you further. Especially when offering them food, they may say “no” in politeness before giving their true feeling. It is best to offer several times.
5. How to handle smoking: Decide beforehand what you will do. Many families decide that students are welcome to smoke outside.
6. Get them to sign your guest book and ask them to indicate their birthdate, which is a natural occasion for you to do something

   special in the future.
7. Conversation is entertainment for your guest. For internationals this is a natural and primary source of enjoyment. They do not need

to DO something, or have some other form of entertainment, such as TV, video, or games; although they do enjoy learning our games. Feel free to let them watch (or assist) you cook dinner or do laundry while you chat.

ABOUT YOUR CHRISTIAN WITNESS

1. Your main witness will be through your life. As you naturally live your Christian life, your student may ask questions that give you an opportunity to explain your faith, motives, and convictions. Be sensitive to wait for the right moments to share. Don't try to force or manipulate the situation so you can talk about Christ.
2. It is important that your friendship be unconditional. Even if your student does not show any spiritual interest, you are sowing seeds for the future.
3. Your testimony will be one of your most effective tools in your sharing. Let it come up naturally, as part of your life's story.
4. In spiritual discussion, avoid arguments. You may win a point but lose their trust.
5. Do not compare religions unless you really know something about their religion. If he/she wants to talk about his/her religion, listen

   respectfully and with genuine interest. Learn from him/her. This will give you a better hearing, as well.
6. Be careful not to use Christian jargon when explaining Christian concepts. For example, if you say "you must be born again" to a

   Hindu, he/she may agree, but have a very different understanding of what that means. Don't assume they know the concepts of sin,

   sacrifice, atonement, etc., or even the basic Bible stories.
7. If you do make a mistake, be very ready to apologize. It will usually be overlooked if the student knows you love him/her.
8. While it is usually not best to invite students to church the first time you meet them, it can be a very natural thing later in your

   relationship. Some of the students are Christians. If the student accepts an invitation, explain what will happen ahead of time – especially if there will be the Lord's Supper, or a collection taken. Make sure they know they don't have to participate in anything they feel uncomfortable with.

OTHER WAYS TO REACH OUT TO YOUR STUDENT

1. Take him/her cookies or homemade food.
2. Give him/her an opportunity to cook his/her kind of food.
3. Mail him/her articles or news items about his/her country.
4. Get together with other Friendship Partner families in your church. If you don't know any other families, call IFI. IFI may plan

   activities that you are welcome to participate in together with your student. You will certainly meet other students and volunteers at

   these activities.
5. Encourage him/her to call you when he/she is lonely or would like to visit you.

6. Phone him/her at least once a week to learn how the week is going, if he/she needs to go shopping, etc.
7. Write/email him/her and send pictures if you took some.
8. Write to his/her family back home, if appropriate.
9. Send birthday and Christmas cards.
10. Pray for the student, his/her family, and his/her country.