

HOW TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE DISCOURAGED ABOUT THEIR TEAM EXPERIENCE

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Some factors that can lead to having difficulties on the Mission field

- Teams are often multi-national, multi-denominational, multi-generational
- Strong, opinionated people on the team
- Many bosses each with their own expectations: sending agency, team on the field, supporting churches, etc.
- Too much to do and too little time to do it
- Work expectations are different for different societies

More factors that can lead to having difficulties on the Mission Field

- Team members comparing themselves to each other
- Unrealistic expectations of oneself and others and God
- Lack of anger management by some on the team
- Past emotional wounds that get triggered
- Lack of proper screening for new missionaries and/or lack of proper preparation
- New missionary is going through culture shock

How to Begin

- BE A SAFE AND WELCOMING PERSON for your missionary to share not only what is going well with them, but also what has been difficult. 1 Peter 3:8 says, "...be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."
- ASK GOOD QUESTIONS that are open, inviting, wondering and clarifying
- LISTEN without judging or giving advice
- VALIDATE THEIR EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVE without taking sides

Open, Inviting Questions

- What has gone well for you on your team in your place of service?
- What has been difficult for you?
- Tell me more about...
- What was it that most frustrated you?
- How has this affected you?
- What other difficulties have you survived in the past and how did you do that?
- How can I help?

Sharing Some Helpful Ideas

- Explain how a team is often like a family system – with a SCAPEGOAT, HERO and a MASCOT
- Issues often can be attributed to breakdowns in relationship interactions rather than deficiency in one person
- NORMALIZE CONFLICT and DYSFUNCTION
- HELP THEM SEE OTHERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Help Them Recognize Their Part

- Encourage them to lay their frustrations before the Lord and let Him show them where they may be in error – sometimes we have unrealistic expectations and/or false assumptions
- Challenge them to own and repent of their part in this conflict/frustration

When to Explore Options for Resolution

- When the person has had adequate opportunity to receive understanding, acceptance and encouragement.
- Letting them talk it out freely in an accepting, caring relationship will help them perceive their situation more clearly
- Remember you are an outsider and need to receive as many details as possible (even then you only have one side)

A Process for Exploring Options

- Ask what options have already tried
- Ask about options they have thought about but not tried
- Encourage them to think about new options
- Suggest some options
- Help explore the benefits and challenges of the most realistic options
- Help them strategize how to carry out the best options
- Discuss communicating strategies to the mission

Helpful Things to Remember

- **Pray with and for** your missionary
- Sharing your own personal stories of struggles and what you have learned can be impactful when done carefully
- **Encourage them to bear with one another and extend a lot of grace** to one another (Eph. 4:2; Col 3:13)
- Remind them they have an enemy and it's not their team mate
- **Challenge them to be a part of the reconciliation** and not contribute to the problem

More Helpful Hints

- **Encourage them to pray for their difficult team mate** and assume the best intentions in their team mate
- **Challenge them to go to their team mate and try and reconcile** if they haven't done so, recognize when they may need a mediator (Rom. 12:18; Eph. 4:25-27; I Cor. 13:5)
- **Refer them to member care people of their mission and even a professional counselor as needed**
- CONFIDENTIALITY!!!
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