

DEBRIEFING TCKS

Paper presented at Euro TCK conference , Mosbach, Germany, March 2007 by Janet Chapman

1. INTRODUCTION

I have lived in 21 different places I would call home. I am not a TCK and have no TCKs of my own. However for more than 30 years I have prayed for, taught, cared for, counselled and loved TCKs. In 1984, I joined OMF International and went to teach seven year old TCKs in a small mission boarding school in the tropical jungle of Malaysia. I spent four years there and then a year on home assignment in England. That was followed by another 4 years in Malaysia. All of which I loved! Home assignment stretched into 18 months as I asked God where next? The concrete jungle of Manila, Philippines is where He led me. This broadened my experience as I taught Grade one at Faith Academy with its 600 TCKs with a huge range of agencies from over 20 countries. I also became TCK Advisor for OMF families, giving input on educational and pastoral care issues.

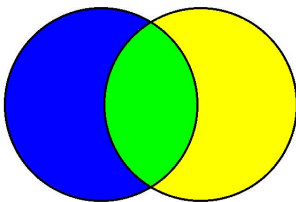
Returning to England 4 years later, I was sick and not given medical clearance to be based in Asia. Following a slow climb back to health I have been doing counselling training and work as OMF International's Co-ordinator for Early Childhood Services developing orientation resources and supporting young TCKs in the early years of home schooling. I also return to Asia leading teams to run TCK programmes at large mission conferences. Together with Janet and Dave Brown I lead reconnect the interagency re entry camp for young TCKs.

I was raised in a loving Christian family but not one where talking about feelings and debriefing on how events impacted me was part of life. I suppose Bible College in the 80s is where I first began learning about this but it is something I continue to work out in my personal life year by year. I also feel passionate about helping parents and agencies provide regular places for TCKs to do this. So welcome to this debriefing workshop! Let's pray asking the Lord to be with us in our speaking, our listening and our learning so that these hours together will equip us to help TCKs on their life journeys.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 A TCK as defined by Dave Pollock is, " An individual who having spent a significant part of their developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership of any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience."

Illustration of TCK with overlapping circles of blue and yellow.



Blue = passport culture
Yellow = host culture
Green = TCK

2.2 Debriefing.

In broad terms a *briefing* is instruction given before an assignment.
In English we say an air crew is given a *briefing* before they do a raid.
Debriefing is what comes after an assignment.

List words for “debriefing” in the mother tongues of the group.
Share the literal translation of those words.

Most agencies have debriefing in place for adults. What about the TCKs?

“One TCK recalls, Arriving in the UK for furlough, we were always excited at the thought of being able to eat pizza and bacon to our heart’s content and to watch lots of TV. However there were things that we, as children, did not look forward to. One was going to our mission headquarters while our parents were being “de-briefed”. Every time we were told people wanted to see us and not just our parents, but usually it ended up with us (the children) sitting in a room for an hour or two, with a box of baby toys, while our parents were upstairs being de-briefed. It often ended with my sisters and me arguing, being very bored and wondering once again, why we had come to the mission headquarters.”

Consider your agency and this continuum.

Where is your agency in terms of debriefing TCKs?

Write the name of your agency and post the note on the continuum to reflect current practice.

- 0 Not debriefing any TCKs
- 2 Talking about the possibility of debriefing TCKs
- 4 Training personnel in debriefing
- 6 Starting to debrief older TCKs
- 8 Starting to debrief older and younger TCKs
- 10 Debriefing all TCKs

List how you could explain debriefing to TCKs under 11 years.

Debriefing is

- Telling my story as part of our family’s story
- Reviewing – looking backwards
- Picking out the important parts of my story – the best / worst
- Describing in words or using pictures, to show what happened and where
- Unpacking my thoughts and feelings about the overseas assignment
- Exploring how I felt at the time of leaving and how I feel about being back
- Sharing my hopes and fears for the future – looking forwards
- Asking questions

Debriefing is not

Counselling

Teaching

Advising

Gathering information for a survey

Debriefing is entirely for the TCK not for what it gives to the debriefer.

3. VALUE OF BEING DEBRIEFED

- * It helps the individual make sense of what has happened,
- * Gives space to verbalise feelings
- * Brings closure and celebration
- * Releases emotional energy to invest in all the hellos of the new situation
- * Affirms the individual

That affirming comes as we give focused time. Time is a precious commodity and when we give it to another it communicates

Your story is worth hearing.

You are valued by me the debriefer.

You are valued by the agency.

You are valued by God.

The attitudes we bring and our non verbal interactions will impact how valued the TCK feels. It is not just what I do as a debriefer and the time I give, but who I am in that process and how genuine and empathic I am with the TCK.

TCKs are part of mission agencies whether it is officially recognised or not. The agency is part of shaping the identity of the TCK.

4. WHO DOES THE DEBRIEFING?

- Personnel Officer/Manager
- Supporting church member
- Former missionary
- Adult missionary kid
- Other member of staff in the home office

One person's suggested list of characteristics of a good TCK debriefer

- Cross cultural experience
- Interest in young people
- Willing listener
- Confidentiality (with certain boundaries)
- Non-judgemental

5. ACTIVE LISTENING

Characteristics of active listening

Attending skills

Square on, Open posture, Lean forward, Eye contact, Relaxed

Encouragers

um, Nod, Silence, Other e.g. Tell me more, That sounds interesting. Go on.....

Empathy

Smile, Frown, Raised eyebrows

Handouts on Listening which could be used to train others in active listening e.g. adult TCKs.

Recommended reading

How to talk so kids will listen and how to listen so kids will talk.

What differences are there between listening to

4-7s and adults?

8-12s and adults?

Teens and adults?

While some debriefing happens informally today's focus is on prearranged debriefing.

3 models to consider

a) Individual TCK

b) Siblings

c) Small groups of TCKs e.g. who are the same age or from the same country

a) Factors associated with debriefing individual TCKs

- concentrated time available for one adult to focus on unique experience of one individual
- children vary in how they feel about being alone with an adult Some possible feelings are delighted, excited, worried , resistant, over awed

b) Factors associated with debriefing siblings together

- One sibling could remind the other of an event which they had forgotten.
- A more confident child talking with the adult might help the more timid one to start sharing
- The dynamics could feel less intense with 2 children and one adult.
- Cheaper? 2 for the price of 1?
- A talkative sibling could dominate the conversation so much so that his experiences become the focus to the exclusion of the other.

c) Factors associated with debriefing a small group together

- TCKs hearing stories of others can reduce their sense of isolation
- Some will be more talkative than others
- Debriefers need to manage a number of interactions some of which he may not be able to anticipate
- One child's willingness to share may encourage another child's willingness
- Cheaper 3 for the price of 1!

5. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AND PRACTICALITIES

A. Who am I as debriefer?

What experience have I had in active listening to adults and to children?

Will it be easier for me to deal with one child or more than one at once?

What time can I give?

What arrangements can be made for the other siblings if I work with individuals?

What space is available?

What feels possible for me?

What feels best for me?

Am I in a position to give the TCK a choice or do I need to choose the model?

Knowing and acknowledging your strengths and weaknesses is important.

B. Who is the TCK?

Will she feel more at ease alone or with siblings?

Will she be able to share more if she is alone?

What do I observe / know of how the siblings interact? Will this aid or hinder the debriefing process if they are together?

What ages are the children?

What do I do and say as the debriefer?

What does the TCK do?

C. Preparing the debriefing space

Chairs/ cushions

Child friendly objects

Tissues

Drink

Useful objects

- Map, globe e.g. blow up globe or atlas
- Aeroplane
- People figures/ dolls
- Suitcase [You could store all the debriefing props in it!]
- Small back pack
- Cartoon faces chart

- Attention grabber e.g. Step into the picture
- Container with marker pens, wax crayons, pencil crayons, pencils, eraser, scissors, glue
- Paper of various sizes and colours e.g. back of wallpaper or lining paper can be ideal and is inexpensive

Optional extras

- Play doh
- Paint
- Puppets
- Sand
- Smiley faces paper or poster to brighten the room
- Books especially picture books on international people, travel, feelings

D. Starting out

Courtney was in my Grade one class at Faith Academy in the Philippines. Once tucked up in bed mum only needed to say, "Tell me about your day."

For 40 minutes Courtney would talk and talk about her day describing in great detail her complete day including Miss Chapman taught us and . I played Sarah got into trouble with Miss Chapman and do you know what Courtney was a talker. She had the vocabulary and the confidence and recall ability to speak in detail. She felt completely at ease with and trusted her mum.

However with most TCKs it will take more than a simple opening invitation such as "Tell me about your time overseas".

A debrief is not meant to be an interrogation. Beware of too many questions. Questions take the communication along my pathway and not theirs. Stay on theirs as much as possible.

E Boundaries

Space

Time

Confidentiality

Explaining these to the family and the agency.

6. PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR DEBRIEFING YOUNG TCKS

6.1 Sample introduction for 4 - 7s

"This is our together time.

What has anyone said about how we are going to use this time?

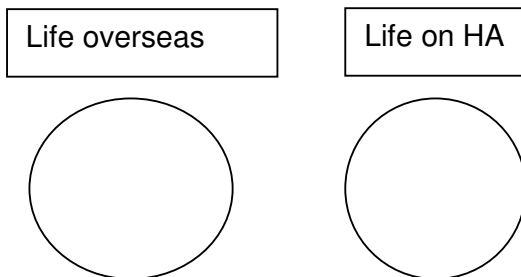
i.e. check out personal expectations

Different TCKs use this time in different ways and I really like that because no 2 TCKS are the same.

Sometimes grown ups are in charge and they tell kids what to do.

In our time we are here together and I want you to feel as if you are in the driving seat taking me for a journey over the past 2 years and the things that have happened to you.

You can take me to meet some of the people some places or some things. I have not been where you have been but I am interested to know what it has been like for you."



Alternative – 2 overlapping circles/hoops to show my life overseas and my life on HA . Overlap the circles to show some aspects are constant.

6.2 Time lines ie When have things happened in your life so far?

Show a sample and let the group create their time lines.

Spend time in pairs describing your life journey.

How did you feel about the exercise?

What age groups could this work with?

How might you change it for younger or older children?

What questions might you ask once the time line has been created?

Which country have you spent most of your life?

Which one feels like home?

You can combine the idea of the child driving a car in the session with the time line.

Where would you like us to begin our journey together?

To work well you will need details from parents.

- When was your TCK born?
- Where?
- Where was he on his second, third, fourth birthdays?
- When did you return for Home Assignments?
- Other ideas?

6.3 Where in the world have you lived?

Locate host and passport countries on maps.

6.4 Treasures /memory bag: What has come back with you?

Ideally TCKs bring some precious items back with them to the debriefing session. If they do not have things you could say, "I can use my imagination but perhaps you could draw some pictures to help us both think about some of your important things. Here is some paper. There are big pieces and small pieces or you can draw on this roll of paper."

6.5 Paper suitcase: What things did not come back with you?

"When people travel on aeroplanes they can not bring back everything they love from their country. Here is a paper suitcase. I'd like you to write or draw some of the things you had to leave behind. Note this might include things you really wish you could have brought as well as things you are very happy to have left behind. "

Note you could let this include people and places as well as things or limit this to things.

Why draw? Research shows that children who draw while they talk about their emotional experiences can give twice as much information as children who aren't given the opportunity of drawing. Tear fund magazine.

Note this is not art and it is not our job to interpret drawings but it can help many children. Note because it is powerful if there is a lot of pain it may be too hard to draw and that is the kind of thing that is normally outside the remit of a debriefer.

Would it work with 8-12?

Goodbye points. Saying goodbye to people, places and things is sometimes easy and sometimes hard. We can give up to 5 points for how hard we find it.

5 is very hard. Nearly broke my heart

4 is very hard

3 is hard

2 OK

0 glad to say goodbye

Remember only you know how you felt about your goodbyes. These points are your points. They might be the same or they might be different to others in your family and that is ok!
Older TCKs could decide on the points for the above categories.
Younger TCKs could draw a smile, a sad face or a straight face if the feeling was ok.

6.6 Photos: Who, What and Where?

What is this? What did you use it for? What is happening here?
Why are they throwing water?
When you talk about that you sound really excited. I think you really enjoyed it!
When you talk about that you sound really sad.
Where was this?

Photos can help children recall details linked not just to the visual but also smells, touch, taste and hearing.

6.7 Places: Where?

Tell me about your bedroom?
Your favourite place to play?
Tell me about Sundays in Mozambique, or Thailand, or.....
Where did you go on holiday?
Tell me more about.....And what happened next.....
Tell me about some tastes of things in.....
What were some of the sounds in

Tell me about some of the smells in.....
I'd love to go with you to your favourite place in..... can you draw or tell me about it.
What colours are there? What will we eat? What will we see?
What will we hear? Who else will be there? What will we do?

6.8 Friends: Who?

- Who were your favourite people?
Shall you write their names or me?
- Who was your most favourite?

Saying goodbye to our favourite people is hard. We feel sad when we say goodbye to people we love. Grown ups find it hard and so do children.

- What did you enjoy doing together?
- What was your friend good at doing?
- Tell me some more things you liked about him or her?

Here is a group of friends. [Show circle of linking beads.]

This one has to go away from the circle?

- What might the others think?
 - What might the others feel?
 - What does he think when it is time to say goodbye?
 - What does he feel when it is time to say goodbye?
-
- Can you still be friends with someone when they are not in the same country?
 - How?
 - How are you going to stay friends with.....?

Why might this section be important for 8-12s?

6.9 Events : What?

Snapshots from the film of your life
Use *Draw on your emotions p 15*
Or use paper and pencil

black paper and chalk [spray with hair spray to seal it]
paper and felt pen
paper and paint

6.10 Emotions: How did you feel?

The average person in church might well say to TCKs.

“Are you glad to be back home?”

What might go through their head when such a question is posed to them?

“This is not home. I have left home!”

“I am not glad but they would not like me to say that.”

“I shall just say yes and hope they will go away!”

How do you feel about being back?

Most people say OK. That covers a multitude of feelings!

God has given us feelings- all kinds of feelings. It is not that some are good and some are bad.

Feelings just are but what we do with them can be good or bad.

Cartoon faces

Glad sad mad scared and lonely.

Which words can you read?

Do you remember a time when you felt.....?

What feelings have you got about being back? i.e. plural

- Allows / gives permission for multiple feelings.
- Gives space to acknowledge the sometimes conflicting feelings.

When people move house they often feel lots of things when people move country and move house they can feel even more things. Some feelings are big and some are small.

Back pack Sample for 4-7s

“Here is a back pack. When people move they come back with all their suitcases and boxes and bags but they also bring an invisible back pack of feelings. It can really help to think about and unpack those feelings with someone you feel safe with. “

Let’s draw or write the feelings of Dennis and put them in his backpack.

Draw on your emotions p 59

Drawing feelings on paper e.g. in a heart shape

Use words, colours or pictures to show your feelings.

This is your private drawing.

You can choose whether you show it to me afterwards or not. “

Which of these activities do you think would work best with 4-7s and 8-12s?

6.11 Creating something to sum up feelings

Memory jar

Use chalk to colour salt.

Create about 5 colours. Match colours to feelings about leaving a place.

Layer these in the jar.

6.12 Drawing things to a conclusion

Sum up the things the child has shared about when things have happened, what has happened, who has been important and how he feels. Invite the child to think back over all you have talked about.

What do you think has been the most important thing you have talked about?

Express thanks for sharing story with you.

And hope that he will go on talking about his memories from time overseas.
Ask if there is anything she would like to tell or show mum and dad?

Pray

At the end you could say “God cares about all the things that happen to us the places we go to and how we feel about those things. I always talk to God about the children who have talked to me. Would you like us to do that together or shall I do it by myself after you go?”

Would you like to say anything to God?

If they say yes ask, who is going to talk first you or me?

7. CLOSING REMARKS

Return to list of characteristics of a debriefer for TCKs

Prioritise

Debriefing teens

Evaluate the 12 practical ideas for children and suggest adaptations for teens.

What next?

How to recognise major stress signs in TCKs. Involve other professionals if needed.

Possible independent or small group work projects

- Write a sample welcome letter to a 7 year old, and 11 year old.
Introduce your self and explain what debriefing is.
Suggest how they can prepare and what they might bring with them to the debriefing
- Prepare a list of questions for parents to answer so you have important information to help a child complete their time line.
- Plan what you would do if you had a debriefing time with a TCK for an hour.
Resources for the room
Introduction
Activities
Conclusion
- List essential and desirable characteristics of someone to debrief TCKs
- Draft a letter to agency on why debriefing TCKs is important
Suggest steps for the next 12 months, 2 years and 3 years.

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