How Have I Changed From My Experience?

An Awareness Exercise for Returned Exchange Students

Directions:

Listed below are statements describing many of the changes that have been experienced by returning exchange students during the past three decades. Some of these may be changes that you, too, have felt. If you haven't thought very carefully about how you have changed, this list may be especially helpful in making you more fully aware of what has happened to you. Read through the list and place a check mark by each change that you believe has occurred in you.

1. __ I have increased my perseverance and self-discipline.
2. __ I am more willing to strive and sacrifice in order to do well in my studies at school or in independent learning projects.
3. __ I am more confident and positive when meeting new people.
4. __ I am more confident and assertive when facing new situations.
5. __ I have a greater capacity to accept differences in others.
6. __ I am more able to share my thoughts and feelings with others, and to be open when others wish to share theirs with me.
7. __ I have more curiosity about and respect for new ideas.
8. __ I have a clearer notion of what I will do with my life.
9. __ I am more flexible and able to adjust to changes in others.
10. __ I am more tolerant of ambiguous situations, that is, of situations that are confusing and open to differing interpretations.
11. __ I have more ability to see myself objectively, that is, to see my own day-to-day problems in a broader, more realistic context.
12. __ I am more deeply committed to an idea, cause, or goal.
13. __ I have a greater sense of .responsibility for other people.
14. __ I have improved my ability to speak a foreign language.
15. __ I am more able to express deep emotions freely.
16. __ I am more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle.
17. __ I am more able to ask for and receive help from others.
18. __ I have a greater ability to empathize with others, that is, to put myself in their place when making judgments.
19. __ I have greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed.
20. __ I can accept failures and shortcomings in myself more easily.
21. __ I have increased my capacity to experiment and take risks.
22. __ I understand more fully my own strengths and weaknesses.
23. __ I am more able to accept as valid other values and lifestyles.
24. __ I have a deeper understanding of (if not necessarily commitment to) the values and lifestyle of my native community.
25. __ I am more aware of the opportunities in life that are open to me.
26. __ I feel greater respect and appreciation for my natural family.
27. __ I am more independent in my relations with family and friends.
28. __ I feel that I need fewer friends, but have deeper (more intimate and more close two or three trusting) friendships.

29. __ I am more aware of the way I use and structure time.
30. __ I have a greater capacity to profit from my mistakes.
31. __ I am more interested in and capable of making long-range plans.
32. __ I am more determined to fully develop my skills and talents.
33. __ I feel a greater need to have diverse experiences and friends.
34. __ I am more balanced in my judgments; that is, less likely to judge things as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong".
38. __ I am more likely to do things spontaneously, that is, to do things without undue concern about possible consequences.
36. __ I am more capable of solving life's day-to-day problems.
37. __ I think more critically; I am more discriminating and skeptical.
38. __ I have improved observation skills.
39. __ I need more time to be alone.
40. __ I am more confident about the decisions I make.
41. __ I feel more surely that common bonds unite all human beings.
42. __ I have a deeper understanding of the problems and issues that confront all human beings on this planet.
43. __ I have greater awareness of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world.
44. __ I am more comfortable being alone, enjoying my own company.

Other changes I am aware of:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Go back now and place an extra check mark by the three or four changes that seem the strongest - or most significant. For each of these most important changes, write a few sentences or more elaborating on topics such as:

1. How did this change come about?
2. How has this affected my life today?
3. How might this affect my life in the future?

The results may give you a fairly clear statement about some of the most important things that happened to you. Adjusting to coming home takes time. You might want to do this exercise more than once in the first year after you return. Some people find their answers change with time. Others find that repeating the exercise confirms changes they are already aware of. Either way, this can become a document you can draw on many times in the future.

(This exercise is adapted and modified from one developed by Neal Grove of the American Field Service)