

1. After returning home from the trip, what did you discover you most needed in helping you process the trip?

-Being able to talk to friends about the trip

-Being able to reconnect with my Belize friends and relive all the moments that we had on the trip, both good and bad

-Ability to relax and take time away from my daily life in order to reflect on all the people, the experiences we had, the ways in which our societies are different, and other societal differences that we experienced

After returning from the trip, we were just left kind of bare and vulnerable I thought. It really helped to have someone to talk to and understand what we were going through. Even though the trip was only 2 weeks long, it had quite an impact and I definitely felt some culture shock returning to Milwaukee. Just having someone there to tell us what we were feeling is normal and giving us ways to cope with the change was very helpful.

To process the trip I needed to discuss/ share the experiences that I had. The way that I did this was reach out to those that supported me. I called most of the individuals that said that they would support me financially or spiritually. I also then sent them all a disc of over 300 pictures that were taken. When I went home I played a slideshow for my parents and grandparents.

The other manner in which I processed was talked extensively with my fellow IMAPers. The trip brought me closer to one individual particularly and we still try to get together to this day to catch-up and not let life get in the way of our friendship.

1) I felt like I needed help figuring out how I could integrate my experience in Belize with my daily life at MU. For example, how I can live more simply/what does living simply look like as a college student? Or how does this experience help us to better serve our MKE community and be in relationship with our community?

1. I think talking to my peers, the ones that truly wanted to hear about the trip in all its details, helped me process what I did and saw by their questions. Also, writing the thank you letter to all of my donors was probably the best way to synthesize the trip and its meaning for me. I didn't want the letter to be too long so I was able to reflect and think about what I am actually taking away from this trip in a very distinct, concrete way.

1. After returning home from the trip I had a hard time processing the trip because I immediately had to throw myself back into school/work/activities. I think I needed more time to internally reflect on the experience, but I could not give myself that because I had to get right back into the swing of things. I am still unsure if even now, 4 months after returning, that I have completely processed my experiences. There are still questions/thoughts that I arise in my mind while writing this and every time I discuss the trip with someone new I find more conclusions. The first group reflection/meeting following our return was very helpful because I got to hear the rest of the groups struggles/reflections. Listening to the rest of the group helped me to start deconstructing my experience. However, I think I needed this meeting to happen sooner/closer to when we came back but then still have another a month or two after.

Personally, I felt like coming back from the trip was a hard transition. It seemed like so many of my everyday tasks were so tedious and unworthy compared to what I experienced on the trip and how the people in Belize spent their days. I felt like I wanted to make my contribution to society in Milwaukee so much more after the trip but easily got caught back up into the everyday life of school, computers, and material possessions.

2. What could have been done better to help you transition back into your life here at MU? What didn't need to have happened?

-More informal group meeting times would have been nice

-Ability to hear back from the communities in Belize and people we worked with or interacted with in order to hear how they are doing - follow-ups with them if possible

-Wish we could have helped to prepare the next group / next year's trip with little reminders and helpful hints for their trips

I really liked how we were asked before we left Belize how we were going to keep Belize with us. We were kind of prepped in thinking and transitioning from this retreat like atmosphere where we could begin to conceptualize that there ARE in fact ways to make the trip a part of our daily lives back in the "real world." I think having some structured and honest conversation right before we left Belize just telling us what we were in for coming back to MU would have been beneficial. Something as simple as telling us "oh, everyone in Milwaukee won't stop and wave and say hi to you like they do in Belize" seems really insignificant but would have been a great reminder.

- I wish the end of the trip discussion was sooner. I also wish that we could have done more things as a group when we got back. I felt that we were close and then all of a sudden we were done when we got back. Perhaps we could have done fundraising for the next year or still stayed a little more connected.

2) I think having a few more follow up meetings would have been helpful in processing the experience in Belize. Perhaps a meeting during the first week back would help ease the transition and encourage dialogue about our transition.

2. The immediate transition back to classes was very tough but I understand the timing with the trip makes that difficult. I think an overnight gathering whether it be a retreat or not would have been helpful to get the group together and discuss some of our thoughts/feelings after being back in our MU student life for a week.

2. Not sure if it is feasible or not, but I think another overnight or day long retreat together would have been great for my transition back into life at MU. I did not really start my own internal reflection until during/after the first meeting back because that was the first time I was forced to set-aside time dedicated only to processing the trip. I think a longer commitment sooner after the trip (within a few weeks) would allow individual participants to get away from the obligations and stressors of college-life and give them ample time to internally process the trip and would provide time to reflect as a group.

I did really appreciate the group that continued to meet after the trip to go through a book discussion on living simply. I think that helped me stay mindful and know how I could live simply in my everyday life.

3. The meetings after the trip are different than before the trip, in your opinion, what makes them different and what could be done to take that into consideration? (The obvious to this is the difference is the actual trip, but there is more to this such as attitudes, awareness, personal strength, etc.) What was different in you? If nothing, that is fine.

I think it would have been nice to have more in depth meetings before the trip - the retreat was real good but it was hard to interact with people at first. I think some of the true group bonding also came after the trip in realizing our similarities and bonding over all our experiences. It was sad that a lot of people from my group though were graduating and left Marquette soon after the trip. Would be nice to have a closer community of former and current trip participants. I think it is hard to exactly focus the meetings after the trip because each person processes the information differently and had different individual experiences during the trip. I think though just being able to bring all the good times together but also being able to express the bad things / problems from the trip in order for people to relate and make sure everyone is on the same page and can get through stuff all together in the weeks and months to follow

After the trip, we definitely did change and helping us maneuver around that was helpful. Understanding what we just learned and conceptualizing that is good because it gives us an action plan on how to move forward with what we just experienced. We had bonded as a group and created relationships with each other and learned more about ourselves. I guess that the meetings after the trip are more charged with a different type of energy that has the potential to be activated and directed in a really positive way.

- Everything was different in me. My life became upside down, and I haven't been the same... I am still trying to figure it out.
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3) I think peoples attitudes are different in the sense that people are more invested in discussing the experience in Belize bc of the relationships that they built in Belize with the Belizeans and the MU group.

3. The meetings after the trip are different in the way that there is context to our conversations that everyone was able to remember or at least relate to. The pre-trip meetings are also very good in a different way. Everyone walks into those with different life experiences, perspectives, and may not totally be able to relate to one another at first but still appreciate the other person's thoughts. Major difference for me was instead of just talking about being present in the moment, loving others unconditionally, and issues of social justice was being aware enough to implement these actions in my daily life through various ways. Finding the greatness in the simplicity of life was a liberating feeling for me and has really shifted some of my priorities and what I value most in my day to day routine.

3. The pre-trip meetings were full of uncertainty, excitement, learning, preparing and high hopes. In the case of my trip, it seemed the post-trip meetings were filled with more reflection, confusion, guilt and understanding. I also feel like people were more prepared (not sure if that is the right word) and "present" at the pre-trip meetings. Some people were definitely more defeated/conflicted at the post-trip meetings compared to those before because of the things they saw and questions that the trip rose. For me personally there was definitely more understanding at the post-trip meetings but there were also still a lot of conflicting ideas in my head.