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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT

These *Frequently Asked Questions* (FAQs) are designed to help Peace Corps applicants who are currently involved in a significant romantic relationship to assess their readiness for Peace Corps service. The responses are designed to educate and prepare applicants for the challenges related to the separation from a significant other that is unique to Peace Corps service. If you are involved in a relationship, please have a frank discussion with your significant other about the impact of Peace Corps service on your relationship.

QUESTION: How can I maintain my relationship during Peace Corps service?

ANSWER: As a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) you will face challenges related to leaving behind your partner beyond just the twenty-seven month separation. You must consider that at times during your Peace Corps service you will encounter a great deal of stress, transition, and isolation. The stress of an intensive training program coupled with the challenge of adapting to different cultural values may prove particularly difficult without the support of your partner. You may feel an overwhelming loss of friendship, love and support at a time when you need it most.

QUESTION: I will be able to stay in touch with my significant other daily via telephone or the internet throughout my service, right?

ANSWER: Regular and reliable means of communications are not available to many PCVs. In many cases mail takes 2-4 weeks for delivery and is not consistent. This is often the only available means of PCV communication with family and friends at home. Please note that all visits from friends and family must coincide with the PCV's vacation. Correspondingly, PCVs can neither take vacation time during the first six months nor the last three months of service.

QUESTION: How might my Peace Corps service impact my relationship?

ANSWER: Peace Corps service tends to be a time of tremendous personal growth. Your perspective on many things will likely change as you experience life in another culture. Returning home often requires as much of an adjustment as did adjusting to the country and culture of your placement in the first place. This can also be a challenge for romantic relationships.

QUESTION: Why does the Peace Corps ask applicants about romantic relationships?

ANSWER: We ask about romantic relationships because past experience has taught us that romantic involvement may either prevent PCVs from completing their twenty-seven month commitment to Peace Corps – or that PCV service may facilitate the end of their relationship. We want to position you for successful service, which means that we want you to have all of this information in advance. Please think critically about these issues as you proceed in the Peace Corps application process. Thoughtful consideration and discussion of the questions and scenarios below with your significant other will only strengthen your preparation for Peace Corps service:

- How significant do you consider your relationship? Does your significant other answer the same way?
- Have you ever been separated during your relationship? If so, for how long? How did you communicate during this time? How often did you visit each other?
- Have you discussed your Peace Corps Application with your significant other? Does your significant other support your decision to serve? If no, why not?
- What are your future expectations for this relationship? What impact do you think Peace Corps service might have on your relationship?
- What challenges to your relationship have you identified as a couple? What strategies will you use to overcome the difficulties associated with the separation that Peace Corps service will create?

Thoughtful consideration and discussion of the scenarios and questions below will strengthen your preparation for Peace Corps service worldwide:

SCENARIO 1:

After thoroughly discussing your decision to apply for Peace Corps with your significant other, s/he, like everyone else, appears to support you without hesitation. However, as your departure date draws closer, your significant other realizes the substantial impact your absence will have on his/her life. S/he does not share their thoughts with you. One week before you are scheduled to say your final goodbyes and board the plane, your significant other confesses his/her true feelings and asks you not to leave.

- Does your significant other support your decision to serve in the Peace Corps? If not, why?
- What coping strategies and expectations might you and your partner discuss in order to best prepare for this major transition in your relationship?

SCENARIO 2:

You are having difficulty integrating into your community because you do not speak the language or understand the cultural norms. Additionally, you are having trouble connecting with your local counterpart and/or starting successful projects. Due to the multiple community integration challenges you are facing, you decide to call your significant other for support. Instead of offering support, your significant other says that s/he misses you and wishes that you would come back home.

- How do you respond to this situation?
- How might you cope with pressure from your significant other to return to the United States?

SCENARIO 3:

You have just finished your first three months at your site and you can't wait to talk to people at home about it. You ride your bike 60 km to town and are able to find a phone with a mediocre connection to talk to your significant other for the first time in three months. When you start telling him/her about your host family and community meetings s/he changes the subject to the latest basketball games and favorite reality show. S/he doesn't seem to be very interested in hearing about your life in the village.

- What are your strategies for staying connected while you and your significant other live distinct and separate lives during your 27 months of Peace Corps service?

NOTE: Significant changes to your status (e.g., becoming engaged, breaking up, etc.) may constitute a major life change and impact your suitability for service. Please notify Placement if your Romantic Involvement status changes.