

Worksheet #8: Jogging Alone

An account of a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in the Dominican Republic

When I first arrived in my village in the Dominican Republic, I began to have a problem with my morning jogging routine. I used to jog every day when I was at home in the United States, so when I arrived in my village in the Dominican Republic, I set myself a goal to continue jogging two miles every morning. I really liked the peaceful feeling of jogging alone as the sun came up. But this did not last for long. The people in my village simply couldn't understand why someone would want to run alone. Soon people began to appear at their doorways offering me a cup of coffee; others would invite me to stop in for a visit. Sometimes this

would happen four or five times as I tried to continue jogging. They even began sending their children to run behind me so I wouldn't be lonely. They were unable to understand the American custom of exercising alone. I was faced with a dilemma. I really enjoyed my early morning runs. However, I soon realized that it's considered impolite in Dominican villages not to accept a cup of coffee, or stop and chat, when you pass people who are sitting on their front steps. I didn't want to give up jogging. But, at the same time, I wanted to show respect for the customs of the Dominican Republic—and not be viewed as odd or strange.

Directions: Use the back of the worksheet to write answers to the following questions.

1. What was the American's point of view here?

4. What was the Dominicans' point of view here?

2. What American cultural norm, or custom, did the American think would be viewed as perfectly normal in the Dominican Republic?

5. What was the reason for the Dominicans' point of view? What cultural norm did the Dominicans have that made them view the American's behavior as strange?

3. Describe a way you think that the American could respect the Dominican need to show hospitality to a stranger and, at the same time, not have to give up jogging.

6. How might the Dominicans begin to understand and respect American cultural norms and, at the same time, satisfy their own need to show hospitality to strangers?