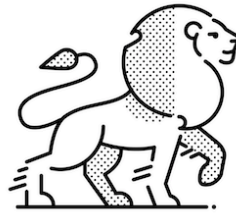


ISD

Counselling Department

INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL OF
DÜSSELDORF

SINCE 1968



A collection of **resources**.

Putting the '**good**' in 'goodbye'.
Learning to **leave** in a healthy way.
Preparing to **stay** in the same way.

Assembled by **Keith Layman**
Counselling Department Head
International School of Dusseldorf

Families on the Move: Working Together to Meet the Challenge

Taken from an article by Barbara F. Schaetti



Five key principles provide a guiding framework for families who are about to relocate: **communication**, **continuity**, **collaboration**, **closure**, and **cultural confirmation**. Important for all families at all times, these principles are especially important for internationally-mobile families facing a move. Each principle is briefly described below and is accompanied by some suggested strategies.

Communication

Open and honest communication is the backbone of all relationships, especially so in a family. It becomes of paramount importance when preparing for a move. You can only call upon it then, however, if your family has been practicing it all along. Some of the following strategies may seem difficult or even impossible to implement if your family hasn't been used to open dialogue. Try them out. Start with the ones that seem easiest. Find out which ones work for you and your family. As with the strategies suggested for all the other principles, you will need to account for such factors as your children's ages and your family's unique history.

Have regular family discussions in which everybody gets to talk about the move, what they're looking forward to and what they're anxious about. Get everybody's burning issues out on the table. This is a good family practice even if you're not about to move!

Remember that different family members may feel differently about the move at different times. The wage earner may be leaving work that felt dead-ended for something new and exciting and increasingly autonomous - or vice versa. The spouse may be leaving a well-loved posting with ample opportunity for personal and professional development for somewhere where options feel limited - or vice versa. The children may like where they are or hate it, be excited to leave or angry - all at the same time. Remember that how someone feels about the move one day may change and change again over time. Honor feelings and encourage all family members to express them freely and without judgement. Don't try to "fix" someone else's grief. Deal with emotions by recognizing and acknowledging them.

Work the energy out through physical exercise, art work, crying and laughing. A couple who liked to dance fast and hard found it to be a perfect pre-move stress-managing strategy. They found that even when one was happy with the move and the other not, they could still dance together and each get rid of pent-up feelings.

Be careful, especially about what your children may be misunderstanding. One mother told me about her young son's sudden panic when they gave away the family's pet. In that child's reasoning, the pet was part of the family. What family member were they going to give away next? Be explicit about what you're doing and why.



Ease a time of logistical confusion. Put a calendar where everybody can see it and mark important dates: when the movers will come, when you will move into the hotel, when you will actually get on the plane, etc.

Educate your family about the process of transition: the typical phases and the common experiences associated with each.

Continuity

Continuity is also of paramount importance for a family in transition. This is especially true of the multi-mover family who relocates to a new posting every two or three years. It is also true of the first-time mover. Constants are psychological necessities for those living a discontinuous lifestyle.

Look on a map to see where you are now and where you are going next. Put the move into geographical context. I still remember when my fifth grade teacher took me over to the class globe and showed me Rabat, where we were then living, and Kuala Lumpur, to which we were being transferred. A simple but important act that helped me build a sense of continuity between homes.

Use your maximum household shipping allowance. Move as much as you can from one country to the next despite the nuisance and the risk of breakage or loss. Over and over, families report that the familiar furniture makes for the feeling of home. For children, it's often the only continuity in their mobile lives.



Encourage all family members to identify their "sacred objects", those few items which remind them of home, family and friendship wherever they are. Take those with you on the plane instead of shipping them with the rest of the household goods. Having the family's "portable roots" with you when you first arrive in your new posting can ease the chaos of transition.

Do "the work of worry" about the new posting prior to your departure from the old. Gather information about the kinds of activities you will find there that match your family's areas of interest. Get involved in them as quickly as possible. Participate in any organized mentoring program conducted through the school or expatriate community. One family, ardent hikers, researched possibilities in India before moving there. They had something concrete to look forward to on arrival, and an activity that also helped them get to know their new host country.

Keep consistent your family routines of meals, household responsibilities, bed-times, celebrations. Move school-age children into the new school setting as soon as possible. Don't relax household rules just because you moved. Do relax them if doing so can ease a particular aspect of your family's adjustment.

Create "welcome rituals" that you can enact whenever your family finds itself someplace new. For example: develop a special family "homecoming" meal for the first night in your new home; tape a big piece of paper to the wall and create a family map of your new environment, with every family member adding to it as he or she discovers something new; take pictures and send them to friends and family left behind. Whatever your rituals, try to ensure that they are ones in which all family members enjoy participating.

Establish family re-entry rituals for any traveling family member (typically the wage-earner). My family evolved a traditional "jet-lag supper" of soup and potatoes and cheese. Other families have used welcome home notes and while-you-were-gone events lists.

Provide at least a few people outside of the immediate family who are, major catastrophe aside, assured as constants in your family's life. Such individuals, whether long-time colleagues, relatives or good family friends, become opportunities for building intimate and trustworthy long-term relationships.

Ensure that you have one place on the planet to which your family regularly returns. This is especially important if you are a multi-mover family. Perhaps a grandparent's or aunt's home, your own cabin in the mountains, a favorite oceanside resort. Such a place serves as a "touchstone" against which the family and individual members can measure their growth and development. While your touchstone may or may not be in your passport country, it should be someplace the family enjoys.

Collaboration

Collaboration is an art that some families may find as difficult to practice as open and honest communication. It means making decisions and problem-solving together. It means sharing power. An international transfer can be disempowering, especially for the non wage-earning spouse and the adolescent child. Collaboration can help return a measure of control to family members feeling out of control in their own lives.

Encourage all family members to get involved in making family decisions to whatever extent is possible. Be sure you are realistic. Don't tell a fifteen-year old that she doesn't have to move unless you're really prepared to consider other options. Specific departure and arrival dates may be flexible to account for individual or family plans. House hunting and selection can involve the whole family and address individual member's needs. Adolescents can give input on which school they would like to attend and why.

Give your children age-appropriate control and planning responsibility you can. Older children can take an active role in packing their own toys and books and then in unpacking them at the other end. My sisters and I used to serve as ground staff when the movers were packing, helped to label boxes appropriately, and then directed boxes to the right locations upon delivery at the other end.



If either you or your spouse travels a lot, decide in advance how you're going to deal with it. Discuss whether and how joint decisions can be made in absentia. Establish ways to make up for missed anniversaries, birthdays and other special events. If you have children, collaborate in developing a consistent parenting style and disciplinary approaches.

Assess your relationships with other family members, especially spouse to spouse. An international move does not heal a relationship in stress, it only adds more stress. Address concerns and issues while you have a familiar support system around you. More and more expatriate communities have skilled mental health professionals and marriage counselors available. Use these resources to help you work together effectively.

Closure

The research literature on transitions is clear: successful adjustment to a new location depends upon bringing appropriate closure in the old. Some families may be uncomfortable saying goodbye and attending to other such closure activities. It's too "touchy-feely," they don't know what to do with the emotion that inevitably gets stimulated; they're too busy and can't afford the time it takes. In reality, families can't afford not to take the time. Inadequate closure can lead to anger, unresolved grief, later depression and other delayed reactions.

Good bye



Be aware that people often create conflict with their friends in an attempt to lessen the pain of loss when one of them is about to move. Develop more healthful leave-taking skills. Build a RAFT: Reconciling conflicts with others; Affirming the relationships you have had; saying Farewell to people, places, pets and possessions; and Thinking ahead by gathering information about your new host countries.

Create "goodbye rituals". Go to favorite places and do favorite things for the last time. Help everybody say goodbye to everyone they care about. Make a memory book, invite friends to paint and sign t-shirts, compile a photograph album, tape a video memoir, plant a tree... A young Japanese boy leaving Paris gave each of his friends a letter in which he thanked them for their friendship and invited them to visit him in Japan. This not only helped him deal with his own leaving but also helped the friends being left behind.

Recognize the emotional connection between members of your family and host nationals working in your home. When you're thinking "my amah, my employee," your children especially may be thinking "my amah, my heart."

People who are leaving have to disengage from their various activities and loosen their emotional ties with friends. Those staying behind similarly have to disengage from those leaving. Talk about this with your family and help individual members prepare appropriately. Timing is important here; be sure you don't disengage too far in advance of your departure.

Cultural Confirmation

Internationally-mobile families, and especially multi-mover children, become bi- or multi-cultural through their exposure to different sights, sounds, smells and ways of being. Fundamental changes, however, may become noticeable only once family members have settled again in their passport country.

Recognize and acknowledge that your family has changed because of its international exposure. You are not, and never again can be, the kind of monocultural people you would have been had your family never left its passport country. Don't mistake nationalistic fervor - your own or others' - for unchanged cultural attitudes. As an American once put it, she never so supports the United States as when she is living abroad. Adolescents may also romanticize their passport country, particularly if their recent experiences there are limited to summer vacations.

Knowledge of other cultures and an expanded world view are the benefits most often reported by those who have lived abroad. Help family members make the most of their international opportunities. Provide your family with regular opportunities to experience the host country culture through, for example, sporting and other recreational activities. Encourage family members to learn the local language and to build relationships with host country nationals.

Encourage family members to serve as "cultural informants" for those moving to or from countries in which your family had a positive experience. Find opportunities to apply your knowledge of other countries and thereby to confirm your expanded sense of cultural identity. Most consulting firms now providing international orientation services were begun by women and men seeking to do exactly this.

Understand that international exposure has a particularly deep impact on children, on those whose sense of core identity is still in development. If you are a parent who was raised in a single country, your global nomad children may develop cultural identities significantly different from your own. As they become adults and integrate their life experiences, you may well find differences between you in such areas of cultural identity as: sense of nationality, sense of belonging, sense of values, and sense of self.

Prepare for the challenge of "re-entry" to your passport country, especially if your family is returning after several years abroad and/or many moves. Prepare family members for the experience of being a "hidden immigrant" in their own country. Once you're "back," find other internationally-oriented families with whom yours can talk openly about your experiences and adventures.

For more information about children and families that move see: <https://transitiondynamics.wordpress.com/>



Ideas to Ease Your Transition



Those who are **LEAVING** need a **RAFT**.

*Pollock, D.C. & Van Reken, R.E. (2001)

shutterstock · 103838570

Reconciliation: Resolve conflicts with friends, colleagues, family.

Affirmation: Express appreciation for your personal relationships and experiences.

Farewells: Say clear goodbyes to people, pets, possessions, and places.

Think ahead: Keep your expectations in line – do not over-glamorize your return to your home country or your arrival in the new place.

Build Your **RAFT**

Reconciliation: Who do you need to work something out with?
What do you need to work out?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Affirmation: To whom do you want to express your appreciation?
What do you appreciate about him/her?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Farewells: Which places and possessions do you need to say goodbye to?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Think ahead: Which expectations may need to be reexamined?

- _____
- _____
- _____

My Moving Plan

Moving can be both exciting and sad. You can make it a bit easier if you take time to think about your move and make a plan for leaving. This guide is meant to help you do exactly that.

My Thoughts About Moving

Think about the time that you have lived here in Germany. You are bound to have many memories. There will be things that you will miss and probably some things that you will be glad to leave behind.

When I leave Dusseldorf I will miss...

Example - ...walking along the Rhine.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

When I leave Dusseldorf I will be glad to leave behind...

Example - ...not understanding the language.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I am looking forward to...

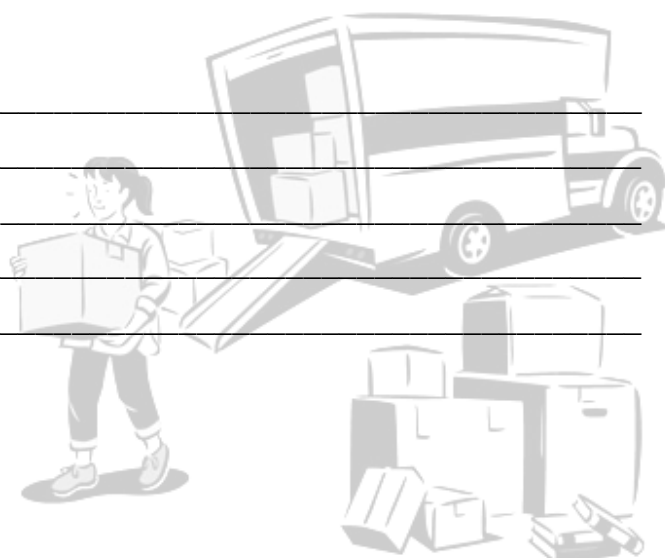
Example - ...making new friends.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I am concerned about...

Example - ...starting a position with a new company.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Saying Goodbye

One of the most important things to do when you are moving is to take time to say goodbye to the special people and places that have become so meaningful to you during your time in Germany.

I want to say 'goodbye' to... (include an idea for a special way to say 'goodbye').

Example - ...Mrs. Treftz for her help with navigating German customs and traditions – Have one last 'kaffee und kuchen' together.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I want to say 'goodbye' to these places... (include a special way to remember the place)

Example - ...The Rhine – Enjoy an evening stroll and stop at my favourite place along the river.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Before I leave Dusseldorf...

1. I want to go to _____ one more time.
2. I want to buy _____ to take with me.
3. I want to take pictures of _____.
4. I want to make sure I stay in contact with _____.
5. I want to say 'thank you' to _____.
6. I want to _____.
7. I want to _____.
8. I want to _____.
9. I want to _____.
10. I want to _____.

Think about any thoughts or feelings that you might want to share with specific people.

Resolve any conflicts and let people know what you appreciated about them.

Example – I want to tell Jason that I have enjoyed spending so much time with him.

- I want to tell _____ that _____.
- I want to tell _____ that _____.
- I want to tell _____ that _____.
- I want to tell _____ that _____.
- I want to tell _____ that _____.

Letter to my future self

Think ahead to December and imagine that you have been very pleased with how the transition for you and your family has gone. **Write** a letter to yourself from the present explaining what you have done to make it so successful. **Keep** this letter and re-read it in December.

[illegible]

Ideas to Ease Your Transition

Those who are **STAYING** need a **RAKE**.

*Pollock, D.C. & Van Reken, R.E. (2001)



Reconciliation: Resolve conflicts with friends, colleagues, family.

Affirmation: Express appreciation for your personal relationships and experiences.

Keep in touch: Out of sight is not out of mind. Plan to reach out to your friends to see how they are doing and what they are doing so that you can continue to be a part of their lives.

Explore: Explore ways to make new friends – clubs, sports, activities, etc. Although your new friends won't replace your old friends, they will become an important part of your life.

Use your **RAKE**

Reconciliation: Who do you need to work something out with?
What do you need to work out?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Affirmation: To whom do you want to express your appreciation?
What do you appreciate about him/her?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Keep in touch: Who do you want to be sure to keep in touch with?
What are the best ways to stay in contact?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Explore: What opportunities are there to meet new people at school?
Where in the local community could you meet new people?

- _____
- _____
- _____



HEALTHY TRANSITIONS

Parent tips for when ES students leave ISD

Rituals are central to healthy transitions...

Rituals and rites-of-passage (weddings, birthdays, etc) exist in every culture. Why? Because they help us move through the phases of our lives in a healthy way.

At home

- It is usual for parents to send in last-day treats to make a farewell party atmosphere. Check with the teacher that this is ok!
- Hold parties, make photo collages, write farewell cards, say proper good-byes, make 'Düsseldorf Memory Boxes' containing items/objects of significance, anything from tree leaves to school work.

Sometimes it is harder to be left than to leave...

When a student leaves peers may be impacted, especially those who have experienced multiple low-key losses (such as many friends leaving), recent bereavements, or perhaps they are about to leave themselves as well.

At home

- Help your child choose a friend who will be staying on at ISD who may be sad when they leave to accompany them to their 'Leavers Lunch' with the ES counsellor. Thus, the counsellor becomes aware of friends who may be impacted when the student leaves and can use the 'Leavers Lunch' to help these individuals.
- Talk to your child about the excitements and disappointments of leaving.

Children who get involved in moves do best...

At home

- Tell children early enough about the move to allow them to become involved. Include them in packing-up the house, searching the web for information on their new home/school, and planning farewell events.
- Choose books that address the notion of moving from the perspective of the leaver and of others (available from the Library).
- This can be a hard time for some children, so take the lead from your child; e.g. When your child raises the topic about moving, take time to answer their questions and discuss it with them. Always try to steer the conversation towards the positive.



HEALTHY TRANSITIONS

Parent tips for when students leave ISD

Staying in touch can be key....

Communicating with past friends and family can give the confidence, optimism and courage to make new friends and meet new challenges.

At home

- Help children gather email addresses, postal details, or Skype / Facebook / Instagram... information for those they want to stay in contact with. When you move, help younger children use these routes of contact for as long as they want to.
- Encourage your child to send news and photos of their new home/school to post on the class/weekly blog.

Sometimes it is easier to leave if you don't care...

Reducing involvement and investment in the place they are leaving is a normal and acceptable way for some children to cope with moving. However, it isn't healthy and it does not support a positive adjustment to the new place to leave on a negative note.

At home

- Watch out for your child who may start sabotaging friendships, become negative about school or the country they're in, disengage from class, or start behaving badly. Talk to your child about the challenges of moving, the importance of maintaining friendships, what they'll miss, the memories they'll take with them, and what they are looking forward to.
- Allow your child the time and space to be sad, but encourage them manage their feelings by engaging in some of the different ways to say goodbye.

Behind every student who is leaving is a parent who is also adjusting...

A child's attitude towards moving and their ability to cope well with it is strongly correlated with their parents' attitudes towards the relocation.

At home

- You can better help your child if you are feeling good yourself. Take time to say a proper goodbye to friends and places.
- Try to maintain normal routines for yourself and the family.
- Contact the counsellor if you need to discuss any of the above suggestions.

Books specifically on preparing for a move...

Moving Overseas by Civardi and Cartwright (Reception)

Let's Move Together by Carol Schubeck (Reception-Grade 3)

Up, Up and Away! by Brenda Maxfield (Grades 3-5)

Ira Says Goodbye by Bernard Weber (Grades 3-5)

Culture Shock! A Wife's Guide by Robin Pascoe (Adult)

The Ripple Effect: TCKs and those they leave behind

 cmhnetwork.org/media-center/morning-zen/the-ripple-effect-tcks-and-those-they-leave-behind

Morning Zen

| Posted September 3, 2015

Morning Zen Guest Blogger ~ Nina Sichel

Millions of children in the Northern Hemisphere will be heading back to school soon, and those in the Southern Hemisphere to summer vacation. And many of those, regardless of location, will be moving on, into a new school environment.

Much has been written about those TCKs who will need some support in their transition to a new environment. I have written about this myself in other blogs on this site. But what about those who are left behind? All those others in international or other schools with high turnover -- the students, the teachers, the other parents who have formed attachments to the mobile child and his/her family -- what is the effect of TCK mobility on those they leave behind?

I was one of those, the child of expat parents who raised us in Caracas, Venezuela, and sent us to international schools. There was a little core of resident expats like us, from all sorts of nationalities, and lots of TCKs who came and went as their parents relocated for their international corporate or diplomatic or other jobs. It was fun to get to know the new kids, and see how they sorted themselves out among the various cliques that are part of any school environment; how they proved themselves in the classroom, or slunk into their seats seeking invisibility; what their interests were and whether or not they'd align with ours. Sometimes it was easy to get to know them. Sometimes, even though their nationalities might match ours, it seemed as though we had little in common other than speaking English -- and some were more fluent more than others.

Many characteristics of the mobile TCK overlap with the expat child's, but the way mobility is experienced may be different. The TCK is ripped from circles of relationship with every move and needs to reestablish community and identity at his next post, go through the ups and downs of relocation, the excitement of the new and the sadness of losing the old. But the stationary person's relationship with him is also ripped away with his friend's move; his circle is also broken. He, too, loses the possibility of a long-term friendship, watching each other grow and develop over time. He, too, has losses to mourn, adjustments to make, a transition to navigate. His friends aren't just moving to another place. They're moving out of his life.

And sometimes it isn't just his friends. Many of the teachers and support staff in international schools are also globally mobile, following their own careers or their spouses' from place to place. So these attachments, and their severing, also become part of the expat child's history.

In the time and place where I grew up, all this was so normal it wasn't even spoken about. Sometimes it was so taken for granted we didn't even know our friends had left for good -- we thought we were only saying goodbye for the summer. A quick so-long at the end of a school day, see you next year -- and off they went. The hole they left wasn't felt till the start of the new school year, when you were supposed to be excited and fresh for learning, not spending your time feeling surprised and sad that your friend wasn't there any more.

We tried to keep in touch with those who left by mail, which could take weeks to reach its destination. Out-of-country phone calls in those days were too expensive and reserved for family emergencies. Friendships faded over time. Some of us learned to cling more tightly to those who stayed, and some of us learned not to invest too deeply in relationships that might dissolve. Now, kids can keep in touch via email, or Skype, or other instant forms of communication, both audio and visual. This can lead to an extending of these friendships, and keep alive the hope that they might someday reunite. The abruptness of farewell is tempered, eased, by looking forward to reunion.

But no matter how prettily you want to paint the picture, no matter how real an imaginary future together seems, saying goodbye is tough. And saying goodbye is a two-way street. Saying goodbye can keep a door open or slam it shut. And for those left behind, not just for those leaving, the way you say goodbye matters. It matters for remembering and it matters for closure. It matters for honoring the time spent together. And it matters for moving on -- and into new relationships.

** For a detailed analysis on the effects of mobility and how to develop school/institutional transition programs, see Dr. Doug Ota's [Safe Passage: How mobility affects people & what international schools should do about it](#) (available at www.summertimepublishing.com and www.amazon.com).*

* * * * *

Nina Sichel is co-editor of the collections *Writing Out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids* (2011) and *Unrooted Childhoods: Memoirs of Growing Up Global* (2004). She leads memoir-writing workshops in the Washington, DC area and continues to collect stories and research about international and cross-cultural childhoods. For more information on TCKs, readers can visit her [Facebook page](#), which includes links to articles of interest, book recommendations, and connection with other TCKs.

Staying Well: 10 Tips for Expats Who are Left Behind

 thecultureblend.com/staying-well-10-tips-for-expats-who-are-left-behind

Leaving is hard. Being left is harder.

Transition is a huge part of life for an expat. That's understood. By the time you sign on you've wrapped your head around the fact that you're about to trade normal for unknown. Returning home is the same story with a twist. There are seminars for all of that.

What they don't tell you in the brochure, however, is that the transition never stops. Expat communities are a revolving door and just about the time you start to adjust to your new found normal, people leave, and your normal changes again.



It's the Expat Exodus . . . transient people coming and going. Tough all around.

The often unmentioned casualties in the whole story however, are neither coming nor going. They are staying.

The Stayers pain is less pronounced, less expected and less acknowledged than those who are leaving. They're not packing up and saying goodbye in a frenzied mess of dinners and parties and awkward, intentional eye contact. They're also not freaking out about the next thing, the new job, the overwhelming inevitables that are coming at the end of a long painful plane ride.

But when the goodbyes are over and the repats are gone . . . there they stand . . . in the exact same spot . . .

No exciting "next chapter." No happy family reunions. No big adventure. Everything exactly the same only much different.

Staying is the only expat transition with no honeymoon period.

Here are 10 Tips for Staying Well:

Tip #1: RAFT's are not Just for Coming and Going

I am a monster fan of Dr. David Pollock's model for transitioning well known as Building a RAFT (Google it). It's so simple and yet so comprehensive.

It is brilliant for people beginning their expat journey. Brilliant again for those ending it.

Unfortunately it is all but ignored for Stayers.

Reconciliation • Affirmation • Farewell • Think Ahead

Don't let people you love leave without walking through this process for yourself. The beauty of such a transient life is the natural growth of a phenomenal, global network of true friendships. Expats get to know people all over the world. Leaving broken bits of relationship unattended to weakens that network. Communicating — VERY SPECIFICALLY — how much you appreciate people makes it crazy strong.

Build a RAFT even if you're not going anywhere.

Tip #2: Flip the Manual Override Switch

Some people are phenomenal at gushing from the inside out. They are naturally transparent and affectionate and so easily expressive it hurts. This tip is not for you. Sorry you only get 9. You may skip to #3.

The rest of us live on the flip side of that universe. We start sensing (consciously or otherwise) that something bad is about to happen. Our internal systems go on red alert and start shutting down. We ignore. We pretend. We may even drum up some conflict to make it less painful to let go.

Catch it early and force yourself to do what is NOT natural. Go manual. Say the things you want to say. Get all awkward and nervous but don't miss your window because it didn't "feel" right. And don't make the excuse of "ehh they know how I feel." They do not. People are dense.

Bonus tip: It's ok to acknowledge awkward: *Laugh about it. Make a joke about it. Sing a song about it (seriously, I met a guy who couldn't work up the nerve to say good goodbyes so he grabbed his guitar and spontaneously sang songs to everyone in the room to tell them how he felt – genius). The point is, when it's over they need to genuinely know how you feel.*

Tip #3: Go Away and Come Back

There are dismal days after the Exodus. Personally it was always gut-wrenching for me to walk around my apartment complex and be painfully aware of who was NOT there and who was never coming back. It's like a ghost town but that sense is exaggerated in the moment. I personally think it's fair to change your scenery for a bit if your schedule and budget allow it. Take your family and go visit one of the spots you've been wanting to see. Grab some friends (if there are still some near) and hop a train to anywhere.

I don't think it's running away to run away briefly. Give yourself a few days (or weeks?) to get your mind on something else BUT (underlined because this is a huge but) don't stay gone (physically or mentally). Make a plan to re-engage your real life. Don't pretend nothing is different . . . but take a break.

Tip #4: Schedule your first Skype Call

Goodbyes are saturated with good intentions. Non specific, ambiguous, unscheduled plans generally don't ever happen.

"Keep in touch."

"Talk to you soon."

"Call us when you get there."

All great thoughts but unlikely in the context of life. Especially the life that your departing friends are about to encounter. You don't have to schedule the next six months worth of weekly calls. But get the first one on the books. Figure out the time zone difference. Know where they're going to be and when . . . and schedule it. That first chat will be sweet. Increase the likelihood of it actually happening.

Tip #5: Grief is Not Just for Dying

Transition = Loss = Grief. Leaving or being left is not death. It's not the same kind of pain.

That said, when something has been a rich part of your life and then it is no longer there, what often happens is very accurately defined as grief. This is the kind of grief that sneaks up on you and smacks you from behind because you weren't expecting it. They didn't die. You didn't get divorced. The traditional grief rules don't apply here but it's the real deal and grief is a process.

Denial • Anger • Bargaining • Depression • Acceptance

Now is a good time to study up on grief. You'll not only give yourself the freedom to go through the process but you'll make a little sense out of what is happening to you. Grief is a real thing. Don't be ashamed about that and do everything (underlined for emphasis) you can to get the support you need.

Tip#6 Get All Creative

Here's my dream project that we haven't done yet because we've been renting and landlords get kind of grumpy about stuff like this. We paint a wall somewhere in our home with a world map. The whole wall. It's huge (in my dream).

Then we hang pictures of all of our friends according to where they live in the world (at last count we had friends from 37 countries). We also paint the countries that we have traveled to a different color and put pictures of our trips. Then we paint the countries that we want to go to. How cool would that be?

This is what I want to happen as a result of my Global dream wall:

- We are reminded every day of how awesome our expat experience was.
- We never forget about those friends.
- We never stop being a global family (big fear of mine right now)
- We celebrate as a family when we get to hang new pictures and paint new countries.
- We've got a huge conversation piece that let's us talk about our story.

That's one idea but there must be a billion more. Get crazy creative to help yourself (and your family) not lose touch with the pieces of your life that have moved on. ***Share your ideas in the comment section.***

Tip #7: Michael W. Smith Was Wrong

Sorry – I know not everyone reading this grew up in the American, Christian 80's like I did but if you did it's likely that you have a love hate relationship with the song (it's hard to even type it) . . .

Friends are Friends Forever

We sang this song at every camp, every graduation and every youth event we attended for at least a decade. Each time the result was the same — dozens of violently weeping teenagers locked up in a gigantic group hug . . . then we played it again because whatever it was we were doing . . . was over and we couldn't bear the thought.

Before I digress let me just take issue with one line . . .

"But we'll keep you close as always . . . it won't even seem (short pause) you've gone . . . "

Nope. Not true.

When they leave, it most certainly does seem like they've gone and they are nowhere near as close as always.

It's a great thought, but in the interest of closing the gap between expectations and reality. I thought you should know.

Tip #8: It doesn't Get Better

Geesh. This blog post is depressing. Sorry.

I talk to a boatload of expats. All of them hate June ([click here to find out more](#)) but the ones who have the hardest time with people leaving are not the rookies, they're the vets.

The 15+ crowd are the ones who ball like babies and say, "I am SO SICK OF GOODBYES!!"

You'd think they might have it figured out by now but they don't. Scratch that — some of them do — but for the ones who really get Tip #9, it never gets better. In fact it gets worse every year.

Tip #9: Never Stop Engaging

Saying Goodbye is hard. It's crummy actually (pardon my harsh language) and frankly saying goodbye to multiple friends every year (not just in June) can wear on a person. It is normal and common to become callous. Whether you consciously make the decision or not your brain is smart enough to make the connection without you.

"If I don't get close to these new people, it won't hurt so bad when they leave."

Ding, ding, ding . . . you, my friend have figured it out. The secret to the painless expat life.

One catch. Write this down and then underline it . . .

It hurts because it is good.

The better it is, the more it hurts. You can absolutely save yourself massive amounts of pain by not engaging in new relationships but as a trade off you will miss even more massive amounts of really good stuff.

And that's only looking at it from a selfish perspective. Long termers who hurt deeply when people leave have inevitably poured their lives into people who have grown by knowing them. Those who figure out the secret, on the other hand, become bitter, closed off and have little impact.

Your choice.

Tip #10. (Wanna' Guess?) Grace — Give it Freely and Keep Some for Yourself

- When you're departing bestie makes up a reason to be mad at you so it won't hurt so bad to say goodbye. Give her some grace.
- When a RAFTing departer "forgives" you for something you didn't even know you did. Give him some grace.
- When you thought they were going to Skype and they didn't. Grace.
- When someone plays "Friends are Friends Forever" at the goodbye dinner. Grace.
- When the new people think they can just come right in and be your friends. Give them some grace and just be their friend.
- When you watch your fourth good friend of the year wave from airport security and disappear . . . it's for you too . . . Whatever happens next, give yourself some grace.

It hurts because it's good. (**underlined because it's true**)

How to say goodbye | The Art of Simple

 theartofsimple.net/how-to-say-goodbye

How to say goodbye

by Tsh Oxenreider

Not quite a month ago, we moved out of our house of two years. Before that, we lived in a rental for our first year in Central Oregon, to get a feel for where we'd like to live.

Before that, we lived in Austin for a year, our "waiting room" year after Turkey to decide what was next. And before that, we lived in Turkey for three years.

Our family has had its fair share of goodbyes. They're one of my least favorite things in the entire world.

If it were up to me—an immature version of me—I wouldn't even bother saying goodbye. I'd just say "See ya" if I thought that might be the last time I saw someone, then sneak out in the dead of night and move on to the next thing. I'm still tempted to, in fact, every time we transition to something else. I'm not a touchy-feely person by nature, and everyone's always wanting to hug or say nice things, and I'm standing there all awkward, wondering what I should say or do next.

But even if I weren't the Miss Awkward INTJ that I am, I'd still struggle with goodbyes. Goodbyes force us to recognize a change in our path, an acknowledgment that we're choosing (or sometimes being forced) to move away from one thing and plow in to the next.

The very reason goodbyes are hard is the reason we actually need to do them well: because we're leaving something, and if we don't fully leave it, we can't be fully present in the next thing.

Sure, it might feel like we can avoid the pain of goodbye—New Things are usually adventurous, and the pain of leaving can be band-aided up from the adrenaline rush. But it doesn't last. Eventually, not saying goodbye well *will* catch up.

When we left Turkey, we went to a week-long debriefing workshop, created specifically for expat families transitioning back to their home cultures. We discussed things like reverse culture shock, helping our kids adjust to a new-to-them culture, and symptoms of stress and burnout, but everything always pointed back to saying goodbye well.

If we didn't properly and thoroughly say farewell, everything was exacerbated—stress, culture shock, depression, confusion.... *All* of it.

Here's what that workshop taught us about saying goodbye well.

1. Don't rush your goodbyes.

Yep, it's tempting to get them over with, like ripping off a bandaid. Don't. Give yourself time to give a final farewell to the people and places that matter most to you. We've found it necessary to start the goodbye process about a full month before leaving.

2. See goodbyes as both a one-time thing and a continual process.

You'll officially say goodbye to someone once. But you'll continually say goodbye to them emotionally and mentally as well—sure, they'll stay in your life, but it'll be different, and you'll experience those differences off and on throughout your New Thing.

3. Use objects as special memory bonds.

You know I'm not a fan of clutter, nor of associating relationships with things (you can still love Aunt Petunia and give away that tchotchke she gave you). But sometimes an ebenezer is helpful—a small item that symbolizes an important moment in your life. A rock, a photo, a piece of art, whatever... so long as you don't overdo it, these things are significant, and they matter. They're a tangible way to allow that special phase in life to stay with you.

4. Choose a proper setting for your goodbyes.

If you're really going to miss your closest friend, don't wait to say bye to her at a busy going-away party. Save that special farewell for a one-on-one coffee date.

5. Pinpoint what, exactly, you'll miss.

This one can take you by surprise—sometimes it's not the sweet potato fries at that restaurant, it's really the tradition of a monthly happy hour sharing drinks and those fries with your group of friends. Or maybe it's not so much the neighborhood you'll miss, it's the convenience of living near grandparents. Being specific helps you know what, exactly, you're saying goodbye to.

6. Don't be embarrassed that you're sad. But don't let yourself stay there forever.

Allow yourself to be sad. We tell our kids this one all the time—don't feel weird that you're sad to say goodbye to your bedroom, even though it's essentially four walls and a door. It's totally legit, and to brush it off as needless will only cause more pain down the road. So give yourself permission to be sad. But then give yourself permission to eventually no longer be sad.

Remind yourself of the better things ahead, of the goodness your New Thing allows. Do what you need to do to get over it, in the best of ways.

7. Don't forget to say goodbye to places and things, too.

Saying goodbye to people is obvious. But it's important to say goodbye to favorite parks, restaurants, streets, and stores as well. It's even okay to need to say goodbye to the ridiculous, like a particular street sign you've always admired, or a coffee drink at your favorite cafe.

In our nomadic modern world, we all will have some versions of goodbye in our life—as I mentioned in *At Home in the World*, 6 out of 10 adults move to a new community at least once in their lives.

It's best to embrace goodbyes for both good and bad, to dive deep in to them, and accept them as part of being human. Let them serve as goodness in your life, so you can walk out on the other side more mature, whole, and loving. Saying goodbye well helps us fully say hello to the New Thing.

Goodbyes are hard for leavers and stayers!

 utesinternationalounge.com/goodbyes-are-hard-for-leavers-and-stayers

To all those who left, to all those who will leave, and to all those who stay...

We can find many advices for people leaving, how to organize a move and how to make it a smooth one for the whole family, children, and friends. – *But what about those who stay?*

I've been the leaver many times. While preparing a move we're constantly switching back and forth between excitement and grief. Nevertheless, if we are the leavers, we won't have to deal with the "after" in the "old place"...

Those who stay not only get told much later about an imminent move, and therefore **don't have all that time to prepare for the change**, they also have to **deal with the emptiness that remains once their friends have left the country**.

Nobody prepares stayers for the grief, the "empty nest" feeling! Everyone supposes that stayers *stay*, they maintain their usual routine and nothing really changes for them... but **this is so wrong!**

The stages that those who are **staying** go through are very similar to those of the leavers!

If we take the classic model of the normal transition cycle that David Pollock describes in the chapter "The Transition Experience" (in *Third Culture Kids. Growing up among worlds*, David C. Pollock and Ruth E. van Reken, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009, pp.66-73) can easily be considered also from the part of the "receiver", i.e the **stayer**.

1) Involvement

This first stage of transition is quite comfortable as everyone still feels settled and comfortable: "we feel a responsibility to be involved in the issues that concern and interest our community, and we're focused on the present and our immediate relationships rather than thinking primarily about the past or worrying about the future" (p.66).

For us stayers this means that our friends don't yet know definitely that they will be leaving. They might show up less frequently at get togethers, literally "hide" because they can't deal with not knowing exactly what comes next.

We feel that there is something going on, but we usually only start grasping it when our friends tell us explicitly "**we're going to leave...**".

2) Leaving

In this second stage, daily life begins to change.

Leavers start to prepare. If the departure date is not too close, they begin loosening the emotional ties, they back away from relationships and responsibilities. They call less frequently and don't start new projects at work. They will start to deny feelings of sadness or grief in order to avoid painful moments, but the grief won't go away, it will hold on until the next stage of transition.

This detaching process is really hard for the stayers. They are confused and can feel anger or frustration.

(Ute Limacher-Riebold)

Leavers will realize that they won't be part of future plans of their community and they will feel left out; they might feel invisible, rejected. The feelings of resentment and rejection can produce anger and cause conflicts.

In this phase it is important to let others know about these feelings: "Failing to acknowledge that we are beginning to feel like outsiders (and that it hurts) only increases the chances that we will act inappropriately during this stage" (p.68).

Leavers in this stage will also be more reluctant to reconcile conflicts with others, risking to arrive to their "next destination with this unfinished business clinging to (them) and influencing new relationships" (p.68). – Bitterness can be the consequence. Some even deny any secret hope in order to prevent disappointment.

We **stayers** loose our ties and tend to exclude the leavers from decisions about future events. We do this because we realize that our friends won't be there to participate. It is hurtful for us and for them.

Sometimes we avoid involving our friends as a response to them not involving us in their process. Instead, we should try to avoid doing this because it will only build walls between us and we don't want to part ways being mad at each other and resentful.

Unfortunately, leavers and stayers often let go of each other instead of helping each other through the process!

Solution:

If the community gives a special attention to the leaver at this point, through ceremonies of recognition, thanking for being part of a team or a group, this recognition helps the leavers to forget that even if "they promise to never forget each other, *already there is a distance developing between (them) and those (they) will soon leave behind*" (p.69).

Acknowledging each other, talking about what we appreciated and cherished about those who leave – and those who stay! – is an important aspect of leaving and being left.

We need to have a proper closure in order to be able to start afresh, no matter if we are leavers or stayers!

Only when we can find closure to that phase of our life we can start the new one without resentment.

3) Transition

The transition stage begins the moment leavers leave the place and ends when they arrive at their destination and make the decision (more or less consciously) to settle in and become part of it.

If we are leavers: During the move, usually we "lose our normal moorings and support systems" and in this sense of "chaos makes us more self-centered than normal" (p.69). The only things who matter to us in this first part of the transition stage is our health, finances, relationships, personal safety etc. Parents in this stage often forget to take time for their children to read stories, to pick them up or sit with them for a few minutes. This causes insecurity and contributes to the chaos and family conflicts are very frequent in this stage.

It's the stage of highest stress: how is the new community going to take care of our everyday aspects of life like banking, buying food, cooking? How will the school be, the new working environment, the neighbours etc.?

Especially in cross-cultural moves adults have to **learn life practically from scratch**: "As teenagers and adults, probably nothing strikes at our sense of self-esteem with greater force than learning language and culture, for these are the tasks of children" (p.70). Sometimes, our cultural and linguistic mistakes embarrass us or make us feel ashamed or even stupid. We easily feel upset, angry and some may even experience depression.

If we are the stayers: we feel abandoned, lonely and hurt. **It is the most intense stage of grief.** Our friends are gone for good. – The house and their place at the table is empty.

We realize that life has to go on without our friends. People don't realize that stayers would love either to follow their friends, or to at least experience the excitement of a new start. But instead we have to "stay behind" and go on with our lives without them. We may not want to make new friends until we feel less hurt and ready for it. – Although it surely is honest to tell new arrivals at our school or work that "we don't want to make new friends right now", please be aware that this is hurtful for someone who just arrived. It feels like a rejection and it needs to be followed by an explanation! Explain that a good friend just left and that you are grieving the loss, that in a few months you may be ready to be a friend again, and that it is nothing personal... Give yourself and that other person a chance. You have been a great friend before and you can be a great friend again. Our world needs more friends and kindness...

From Leaver to Stayer

The first times I was the *stayer*, I didn't have any problem with it. I was even happy not to have to organize an international move and think about the million things that need to be done last minute.

But after a few goodbyes I started feeling the deep hurt, the grief not only for those who were leaving and the life we no longer would share, but also the grief for not being on that constant move anymore.

I resented my husband for having found a permanent job. Something we actually hoped for while hopping from one 3 years job to another. I still have the three-years-itch and need to make major changes in my life to keep sane (and I'm not sure it's an exaggeration!).

But being on the receivers end of a "goodbye" isn't remotely as exciting as being the one who is moving!

When I realized this for the first time, I suddenly felt guilty about the many times I left without saying proper goodbyes because I was too busy with the move...

Especially for children this is the hardest time. At school, the seat of their friend is empty and they often physically feel the loss. They are sad: some will talk about it, some won't.

It's important for parents or caregivers to be aware of the grief these children are feeling and to give them the support they need, to talk about it and give it a name.

The same applies for adults. When we realize that we keep on thinking of the person who left, we need to find a way to express and share this feeling of sadness and grief.

We grieve for a time that is gone and that won't come back and we grieve for the things we wanted to do with this person who no longer is part of our daily life. – I remember avoiding a lunchroom for many months because I used to go there with the friends who left and I couldn't bare being there without them. I needed quite some time before I could set foot into that place again...

4) Entering

In the entering stage, leavers start to accept that it is time to become part of the new community and they begin to figure out how to do it. They still are vulnerable and feel a lot of ambivalence in this stage. They start to learn the new job, the rules at school, some start learning the new language. "Emotions can fluctuate widely

between the excitement of the new discoveries (...) and the homesickness that weighs us down" (p.72). People feel how different they are in the new place and wish to go back where they were "normal". But they are in the learning process about how life works in the new place.

"Entering is the stage where leavers need good mentors, someone who can show us how to function effectively in this new world"

At the end of this stage, **hope begins to grow and people feel the first sense of belonging** to the new community.

For **stayers**, this is a sort of entering phase too. It is an entering and re-adjusting phase where they have to go back to their lives without their friends and find a new sense and meaning. In this phase they will have moments of "homesickness": they will miss their friends and wish they would come back. – It is an intense time of mixed emotions but everyone will eventually adjust. – What helped me the most was to meet with other stayers and talk about what was going on. **Shared grief is half grief...**

I also invite my children to do the same, to look at pictures of their friends, take short trips down memory-lane shed a tear. Acknowledging the feelings is very important to get through this transition in a healthy way!

5) Reinvolvement

This stage is like the light at the end of the tunnel: adaptation and reinvolvement is possible! Every **leaver** will need some time and willingness to adapt before becoming part of the permanent community in the new place. Some may even feel a sense of belonging, of intimacy and realize that their presence matters in the new group.

Stayers will slowly achieve a new balance without their friends. They will have found other routines, and maybe new friends and carry on.

Time feels present and permanent as we focus on the here and now
rather than hoping for the future or constantly reminiscing about the past. (p.73)

Knowing about this process of transition, about the various stages helps to be prepared, to recognize where we are and what will come next.

We will be more attentive in making the right decisions and choices to benefit from the new experiences "while dealing productively with the inevitable losses of any transition experience" (p.73).

Ten Tips for Transitioning TCKs

 onechallenge.org/2015/10/01/ten-tips-for-transitioning-tcks

“Ask adult TCKs (Third Culture Kids) about the most challenging transition of their lives, and they’ll most likely say, ‘College’ or ‘University’ which I’ll use interchangeably here,” says Michele Phoenix, an MK/TCK Advocate and long-time friend of OC workers at Black Forest Academy.

Here she shares her top ten tips on this topic...

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It’s not surprising, really. Where most young people entering higher education have left their home and family in another part of the country, **TCKs have often left their entire universe behind**—the sights, sounds, savors, customs, languages, mentalities and belief systems of places that have little similarity and relevance in this new world.

This degree of loss, combined with the oddness of re-entering a “home” culture that feels somewhat foreign, can create an emotional-cultural-transitional Perfect Storm.

*It will only be successfully navigated with proper preparation and intention.*

It’s to equip those cross-cultural “sailors” that I’ve outlined ten tips to help with transition. (Consider this the condensed version of my usual session on this topic!)

## 1. Submit to the process

It’s going to ebb and flow. One minute you’ll feel like you own this transition and the next you’ll feel like you’ve made no headway at all. There’s no avoiding the stop-and-go, and our healthiest posture is to expect it and accept it.

The same goes for those unavoidable faux-pas. As TCKs, we want to avoid failure and embarrassment. After all, *we pride ourselves in our cultural savvy.*

*But there’s no such thing as a flawless transition.*

This is particularly true when crossing several “borders” at the same time (like cultures, educational styles, independent living, financial autonomy...). It’s going to be messy and it’s going to take a while.

*Be patient with yourself and give the process the time it requires.*

Allow yourself to fail. One small misstep doesn’t mean you’re doomed—it means you’re trying and learning. Acknowledge and celebrate your successes. And give yourself grace for the inevitable mistakes. Both are part of the process.

## 2. Use your cross-cultural skills

If you were dropped into a primitive tribe in the Amazonian jungle, you'd find a way to weave yourself into its culture. After all, you're a TCK. You'd overlook the "jarring" and invest your effort in understanding the whys and hows that make the culture tick.

*Do the same with this new world. Enter it as if it were an exotic foreign land, using all the cross-cultural skills you've developed in your international life.*

Ask questions, show mercy, be accepting—particularly if this is your passport culture. (As *tolerant as TCKs are, we reserve a special reluctance for our "home" country.*) Be inquisitive and adventurous, open-minded and forgiving, just as you would be in that primitive tribe. Analyze, adjust and adapt.

### **3. Know and respect this culture's values**

Some of what the new culture values may feel fake to you. It may feel intrusive or even offensive.

There will be aspects of this place that you won't like, values you will deem misguided or demeaning. Remember this: *a culture is designed for those who belong in it to feel comfortable.* Initially at least, you're really just a visitor—not the person for whom the culture is created.

*So recognize its values for what they are and determine how you will intentionally respond to them.*

Some of them can be acquired—like manners, social norms and communication styles. Others, like religious zeal and hierarchical structures, may just need to be respected.

Honoring what is "normal" in your new culture will likely make connecting easier and faster.

### **4. Be aware of relational differences**

This is perhaps **the most frustrating** aspect of adaptation for TCKs—and it would take entire paragraphs to unpack it all here. Here's the main thing:

*TCKs dive deep extremely fast and people living in a single culture tend to dive shallowly and slowly.*

Once we realize how foundationally that discrepancy influences our interactions, many of our frustrations with transition will lessen. Just click **[THIS LINK](#)** to be taken to the article devoted entirely to this difference between TCKs and mono-culturalists.

### **5. Find a trusted Cultural Coach**

You're going to need to ask some stupid questions. There's just no way around it. As you're making friends and connecting with people, try to figure out who might be a good person to answer those queries.

*How do you order at Subway? What purpose do cheerleaders serve? What's a gallon in liters? Can you pass on the right? Can I keep my machete in my dorm room?*

Some traits of a good Cultural Coach:

- Understands that you're foreign in some ways
- Knows more about the culture than you do
- Will laugh *with* you—not *at* you

You may need different coaches for different areas of your life. Having them in place early will allow you to figure things out more quickly, and without unnecessary embarrassment.

## 6. Laugh at yourself

Seriously. Even with a stable of Cultural Coaches reachable on demand, you're going to mess up. Laughing at yourself is a hugely important skill.

*It's our fear of doing something wrong that keeps us on edge—cautious and nervous.*

Ridicule won't kill you. Being looked at weirdly won't either.

So if you mispronounce an Indian dish, accidentally sign up for your 9<sup>th</sup> credit card or discover that peeing by the side of the road is illegal in some locations, laugh at yourself. (Then pay the fine—seriously, that's non-negotiable in most places!)

## 7. Debunk generalizations

Red-flag any statement about the culture you're entering that begins with "All [inhabitants of this culture] are—" They're all clueless. They're all materialistic. They're all shallow. They're all fat. They're all socially inept.

*Nothing sets a person up for transitional failure more than a condescending attitude. Arrogance, even just perceived, is the most alienating of traits.*

But if you give the people a chance—one by one, not as a whole culture—you may find individuals who are exactly the friends you've been looking for. They may not have experienced all you have. *That's okay.* You may not relate entirely to their lives either. Relationship can transcend those differences.

Discarding generalizations creates space to be surprised by friendship.

## 8. Revise your vocabulary

The way this culture functions and the behaviors its inhabitants exhibit aren't necessarily wrong, useless, weird or stupid.

They're different.

*Considering something "different" opens the door to dialogue and understanding. Calling it "wrong" slams the door shut. So do words like "weird," "useless" and "stupid."*

The attitude you bring to transition will, in great part, determine its outcome. And the words you use to describe what you don't like or understand will influence your attitude. Choose them wisely, even if just speaking to yourself.

## 9. Acknowledge and address your grief

It is *hard* to leave one world and enter another. Where mono-cultural peers might be

leaving their families and home towns as they enter a new educational institution or career environment, a TCK is typically leaving much more. It's the Universe I referenced at the beginning of this post.

We miss more intensely. We long in a more visceral way because we haven't just lost a location, we've lost what feels like *everything*—the places and communities that defined us seem as distant as the stars...so does the person we used to be when we breathed in those worlds.

*Like transition, grief is a process. Like transition, it will ebb and flow.*

*Like transition, there's no hurrying or avoiding it.*

Admit grief to yourself and find someone to whom you can express it The health of your Present depends on how healthily you process what you've lost.

## **10. Exercise gratitude**

Few other disciplines carry the same ability to transform your life! Ann Voskamp (author of "One Thousand Gifts") did some research into the subject and found that people who focus on gratitude –

- Have a relative absence of stress and depression. (Woods et al., 2008)
- Make progress towards important personal goals (Emmons and McCullough, 2003)
- Report higher levels of determination and energy (Emmons and McCullough, 2003)
- Feel closer in their relationships and desire to build stronger relationships (Algoe and Haidt, 2009)
- Increase their happiness by 25% (McCullough et al., 2002)

My advice? Get a notebook or journal that you'll keep by your bed. Every night (*every night*), take a few minutes to write down three things for which you're grateful. At least one of them needs to be something that happened that day.

*Because the negatives of life have a way of leaping up and smacking us in the face, it's important to counter them with a determined effort to see the positives.*

As simple as it seems, this small exercise has the potential to substantially enhance your transition...and your life.

## **In conclusion**

Transition is not for the faint of heart. Under the best of circumstances, it's a challenging milestone. My hope for the TCKs attempting it today is that the wealth of resources available to them will help to prevent some of the predictable missteps and allow these Global Nomads to enter other spheres with fewer regrets and brighter victories.



# Where are you from, third culture kid?

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 [internations.org/guide/global/where-are-you-from-third-culture-kid-18835](https://www.internations.org/guide/global/where-are-you-from-third-culture-kid-18835)



By [Anita Barot](#)

Helping your third culture kid answer the question of where they come from with a smile can be quite a challenge. Many children struggle with their status of being a third culture kid but there are ways in which parents can support them. InterNations member Anita has some advice for you.

Bangkok is a cosmopolitan city where the culture of children is often in contrast to their race, ethnicity, or country of origin. Children may appear to be from a certain country of origin by their features, but they have often lived away from that home country for a majority of their childhood. These children are called “Third Culture Kids” (TCK).

Their experiences tell us a different story about what is home to them. A child may have been born in Germany, but be able to speak Chinese, German, English, and Thai. This child may have gone to school in four different countries. When he goes back to Germany, he may feel odd and be unable to relate to his peers. For example, he may refer to specific multicultural experiences that his friends cannot relate to. When he comes back to his host country, he is much more comfortable because his experience is shared by others like him.

## What Makes a TCK?

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A third culture kid is defined as a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parent’s culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all the cultures while not having full ownership in any. TCKs’ lives are characterized with high mobility and traveling between different worlds (according Pollack, *Growing up Among Worlds*, 1999). While being a TCK has challenges, there are many things parents can do to help children and adolescents find success in their emerging cultural identity.

TCKs have not developed their basic value system, sense of identity, and establishment of core relationships with family and friends in their home culture so they often look to their host country to figure out how to behave in different contexts. TCK kids have to comprehend the rules in each country in order to better adapt to each new background. As a result, it takes longer for them to develop their personal identity because they have to deal with more changes and then have to synthesize the information from the past with their current life.

## How to Help Your Child Adjust to Being a TCK

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While it is exciting for individuals to live abroad and see new things, it’s also a huge loss for them as they have had to say so many “good-byes”. Some of the things kids have said regarding the TCK experience are: “I don’t know what home is. It’s confusing. I hope someone does not ask where I am from because I don’t know what to say.”

“Out of the blue, I feel a sense of sadness and I can’t explain why.”

“I am not sure where I am going to be next year. I am not sure how much to invest because I will be leaving”.

What can you as parents do to help your child deal with transition and change as you make another move to a new country? A few suggestions based on years of experience with counselling follow:

## Provide Empathy

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Empathy means trying to understand what it is like to be in someone else’s shoes. Empathy is not just saying the words but really conveying your understanding by asking questions, listening, and being there through the child’s pain.

For example, if your child misses his old friends and does not want to move to a new country. He might even be angry, acting out, and mad about moving.

The non-empathetic response would be: “You will make new friends like you always do. Do not worry about it. You will be at a better school with nicer facilities. We have to move because of my job. I thought you understood that.”

A more empathetic approach is: “I know that it is hard to miss your friends and I get it. I am sorry we have to leave and we will do our best to come back and keep in touch with your friends. What kind of activities do you want to do with your friends before you leave? I know that they are very important.”

It is important to acknowledge their feelings as real so they feel like they can talk to you when they are sad, and that your children feel validated for their experience.

## Help Synthesize Their Experiences from the Past

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You can talk about their different experiences in each country. Since a child has experienced change, what helps is that you are talking about his/her experiences and that you are emotionally supporting them through the changes. What hurts a TCK child the most is that they can feel alone and misunderstood by so many people.

They have had a life that is unrecognizable to many who live in their home country or their host country. If parents can show a child that they are genuinely interested in the child’s feelings, it will convey love, trust, and affection. Many times the parents do not want to know because they are experiencing their own grief and guilt for what has happened in the past. The truth is that the more you are open to talking about their experiences, the better it is for you, your child, and your relationship with one another.

## Be Clear about Your Future Plans

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We tend to be protective of our kids because we do not want to hurt them so we postpone the news of moving so they are not hurt or anxious. If you do not tell your child, they cannot trust you and are more anxious about what is going to happen. It is important to be honest and share what is happening so they can feel a sense of control.

When a child has some notice about the fact that they are leaving, they can process their feelings of loss and can have time to mourn what has been left behind. Sometimes your child is “fine” and does not feel any sadness at the moment. That is okay too as long as you continue to check-in and notice other signs of how they are processing their feelings. It is important for your child to have a chance to say “good-bye” in whatever way they can.

As parents, you can ask the following questions:

- How would you like to say good-bye?
- How do you want to mark this transition?
- Do you want to draw a picture?
- Do you want to take pictures and make an album?
- Do you want to do individual activities with specific friends?
- Do you want to do a party?
- What ritual do we do the night before we leave?

## Model Appropriate Behavior

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How can I model to my child about how to deal with change? You have to model by immersing yourself in your new culture. You can make friends and appreciate new things in your environment. It is not easy for the accompanying spouse who has had to give up one's career to say good-bye to their friends and family, and start fresh. Children might pick up on these feelings from their parent and act out. It is important for parents to show their kids how to talk about personal experiences and have a better outlook on possibilities. It is natural to experience anger, frustration, and loss when you move.

How can we move from the anger to a place of enjoyment and fulfillment? That happens when you acknowledge the loss, identify your needs, and discover ways to fulfill your needs. For your kids, it will help if you plan play dates and help them find people in the community that they feel a connection to. It does not in any way substitute the friends they had, but it helps them channel their feelings of loneliness and longing by developing new connections.

## The Upsides of Being a TCK

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Finally, you should stress that being a TCK is a gift because he or she has a chance to learn valuable lessons that cannot be taught. For example, travelers tend to get frustrated when they visit countries and find that they are not able to shop during the middle of the day. According to David C. Pollack, “TCKs understand that this custom not only helps people survive better if the climate is hot, but it's a time when parents greet the children as they return from school and spend time together as a family. Many TCKs learn to value relationships above conveniences as they have lived in such places and it is a gift they carry with them wherever they may go”( Third Culture Kids: Growing up Among Worlds, 1999). They are highly adaptable and learn things quickly due to high mobility and many cross cultural transitions. TCKs think outside the box and are able to understand people from diverse backgrounds.

In order for a child to thrive and take advantage of their international experiences, they need to be taken into consideration and be cared for as they deal with the confusion, anxiety, and grief. Third culture kids have the same needs as any child to be loved, valued, and to experience being a part of a loving community. As parents, you have the ability to help your child navigate through this difficult, challenging, and amazing experience by being open to the full range of emotions that can come up for your child as you start your next journey.

## About Anita Barot

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Anita Barot is a California Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist now practicing in Bangkok and Singapore. She has more than 10 years of experience counseling children, adults, couples, and families to help them communicate better, resolve conflict, and overcome challenges in their personal and professional lives. To learn more, email [info@lotustherapy.com](mailto:info@lotustherapy.com).

# How to raise third culture kids

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 [expatica.com/ch/education/Raising-third-culture-kids\\_732915.html](https://expatica.com/ch/education/Raising-third-culture-kids_732915.html)

Living overseas presents both a world of opportunities and significant challenges for children and adolescents, but following some helpful tips on raising third culture kids can help them (and you) transition.

Children of expats have been called 'third culture kids'. David C. Pollock, a key researcher in this area, says “a third culture kid is an individual who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years in a culture other than that of the parents, resulting in integration of elements from both the host culture and parental culture into a third culture.”

Learn more about them and some helpful advice on how to raise third culture kids and help them transition:

## What are third culture kids?

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Third culture kids (TCKs) share some important characteristics: they are often able to develop friendships quickly; they are self-confident, flexible, adaptable and frequently have a high degree of independence. They may also exhibit higher levels of maturity than their home-based counterparts. Importantly, they also develop the ability to move between cultures through their linguistic skills and their cross-cultural awareness.

There are benefits that come from living internationally, but there are also challenges. During their adolescent years, young people work out their identities, with friends and peers becoming central to their lives. Moving can put a great deal of stress on them and their families with disruptions to their social lives and their sense of stability.

## The five stages of TCK transition

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The research on TCKs, including David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken's *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* and Mary Hayden's *Introduction to International Education*, suggests that there are five stages in making a transition from country to country: Involvement, Leaving, Transition, Entering and Reinvolvement.

### 1. Involvement

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At this stage, life seems normal: we are part of a community, we follow its customs and we are focused on our present and immediate relationships.

### 2. Leaving

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The stage begins when the idea of leaving is raised, ending with the point of departure. The leaver begins loosening emotional ties and moving away from the relationships and responsibilities they have had.

### 3. Transition

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This stage begins with the departure and ends with the decision to settle in and become part of the new place. Connections with the past seem gone and they enter a community where relationships are already well-defined.

### 4. Entering

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The individual has decided to become part of the new community. They may still feel vulnerable, but life is no longer chaotic and a sense of belonging to the new community has begun.

### 5. Reinvolvement

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Finally, the individual becomes part of the community. They accept their home, the new community and their role in it.

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## Four steps in raising third-culture kids and helping them transition

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Once a move is confirmed, parents, teachers and support staff in schools need to work proactively to help students make a successful transition. RAFT, or 'Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewells and Think Destination', is a four-point checklist to think through when helping children of expats prepare for transition.

'Reconciliation' means resolving any conflicts that may exist between friends. 'Affirmation' acknowledges the importance of those significant in our lives at the current place and prepares for future maintenance of these relationships. Scheduling time for 'Farewells' is crucial, too. Pollock and Van Renken suggest that parents talk with their children about what to take and what to leave behind. Their final point, 'Think Destination', is about thinking realistically about the new destination while saying goodbye to the old.

In *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, the parent-to-child relationship is described as the most important factor in how international children face the challenges of living abroad. TCKs need to be valued, thought of as special, protected and comforted. This is true for all children, but in the context of living far from home the need for this kind of care becomes acute.

Parents can listen carefully to their children's concerns and behaviour and try to understand the reasons for it. They can also ensure that there is family time available to be emotionally (and physically) present.

Schools such as the (ICS) have programmes that help with the transition into the new school and assist leaving families. After the move, parents can support their child by helping them find ways to connect with others and maintain bonds with family members left behind at home.