



# What to expect as an Expat

## Tips to navigate your first few months abroad

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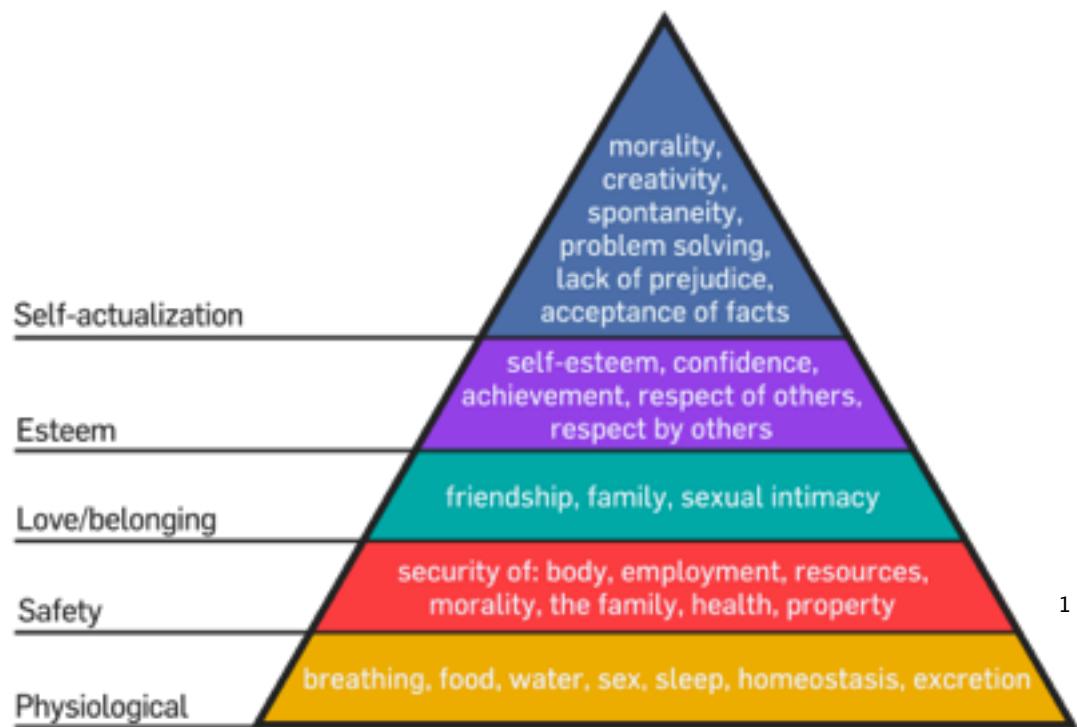
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Plus plenty of Doodle  
Space for the Doodlers,  
and  
Note-taking space for  
the Note-takers.

## Introduction

People have needs. According to American psychologist Abraham Maslow, you can categorize them into five levels. His argument is that as humans, we ultimately strive for “self-actualization”, but have to cover our basic needs before we’re able to concentrate on higher goals.



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<sup>1</sup> Picture credit: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The Physiological level is that of basic survival needs: food, clothes, shelter, and things to do with bodily functions we won't go into. Most likely, you have these needs covered, right up until you become an expat.

Maslow's next level is all about Safety. Once you have your basic survival needs met, you can start worrying about the neighborhood. Is that rustle in the bushes a saber toothed tiger or a bunny? Today, you know which route to take to work, where to buy groceries, maybe you've even been with the same family doctor all your life. But what about that new place you're moving to?

Then comes my personal favorite: love and belonging. Don't underestimate what a lack of social circles, professional networks, friends, and family can do to your system.

Your international assignment can help you reach your self-esteem and self-actualization goals, but it can also drag you down. In Part 4, we'll look at how you can prepare for identity shifts, make the most of your time abroad, and Part 5 pulls it all together.

You'll find questions to ponder in each section, a collection of resources, and my contact details at the end.

Awareness of Maslow's 5 levels is a helpful tool to analyze where your stress is coming from.



## Part 1 Physiological – Food, Clothes, Shelter

### Food

Filling even basic food needs in the first few weeks abroad can be tricky, especially if you don't speak the local language. International hotels normally offer international cuisine, and many American chain restaurants have made their way abroad. If your destination is more rural, familiarize yourself with the most common food vocabulary ahead of time. Know how your favorite ingredients are spelled in the local alphabet, so you can recognize the labels in the shops, or print out pictures to show what you need.

Not every country is as abundant as the USA when it comes to **special dietary requirements**. If you have a gluten intolerance, for instance, do some research to see which products are easily available in your host country. If you're vegetarian or vegan, find local practitioners in food forums who can help you set up and tell you where the best farmers markets are.

**Word of caution:** not every country has the same hygiene standards.

Consider shops that display their wares in open containers: I have seen plenty of children who take those as an invitation to touch or sneeze on.

If some of your favorite food from home is non-perishable and cleared for transport across borders, bring it. In fact, have your family members write up the **recipes for your favorite dishes**. Be prepared for those dishes never tasting exactly the same due to the different make-up of local water, flour, and produce, but the act of cooking and the general smell will remind you of home when you need it.

Next to language, food  
is one of the main  
ways we identify with  
our home cultures.

**Homesickness** is something I've only experienced in the last few years. When I first moved to Scotland as a 20-something in the 1990s, I was invited to join "the German society". My snooty response? "Why would I want to do that? If I'd wanted to surround myself with Germans, I'd have stayed in Germany!" Ah, youth. Blissful ignorance. I've changed that opinion somewhat. I'm still a big fan of "when in Rome, do as the Romans do", but the longer and further away I am, the more I appreciate my heritage. Especially Grandma's Christmas cookies.

## Clothes

Let **climate and cultural norms determine** what you wear. Your first faux-pas may be forgiven because you are a foreigner, but I advise against knowingly breaking the unwritten rules. As an expat, you are no longer only representing yourself, you are an ambassador for your

country. For example, if Italian church-goers expect your knees and shoulders to be covered, cover them. If your colleagues are uncomfortable with “casual Friday”, don’t try to force it.

Having said that, if you have old embarrassing but comfortable work-out clothes or college sweaters you love, pack them. Even if you’re moving to a hot country, because a) it’s always sweater-weather once in a while, and b) the temperature change from outside sticky-hotness to inside frigid air-conditioning is hard on the immune system. Layers are your friend!

Ladies, don’t be dismayed if European dress sizes sound way bigger, or if finding shoes above an American size 8 is tricky in Singapore. It’s not personal, it’s cultural.

**Bring your favorite clothes.** They are an expression of your style, your self, and will make you feel confident. They’ll also provide a sense of familiarity and peace that you will welcome in your moments of nostalgia.

You may not want to wear any of them outside your home, especially if the country you’re moving to has stricter rules to follow, but that’s ok. There comes a time in most expat’s lives when we **close the curtains** and turn our home into our native country – cooking our foods, celebrating our holidays, wearing our clothes – even if it’s only for a few hours.

## Shelter

You're probably most worried about the big-ticket item: the actual house. What neighborhood is it in, how about the school district, are there enough bed and bathrooms. What to do with the house you're in now? Working with a knowledgeable real estate agent helps alleviate many of those concerns.

The challenge is turning a house into your home. What always helped me was putting up my pictures, using my bed linen, and decorating with choice knick-knacks and pillowcases that went with me everywhere.

Most companies provide moving support. Movers will pack the household goods (HHG) for you to satisfy the terms of insurance. You should take pictures of everything you have them pack for the same reason.

Some restrictions for your household goods may apply, because transport and freight costs are volatile these days and shipments may not be released from customs for weeks on end. If your HHG don't fill a whole container, you may have to wait until it gets filled with other merchandise before it goes en route.

If you have a favorite holiday decoration, bring it. Even if the country you're moving to doesn't celebrate that holiday. You may want to keep the tradition alive for your kids, and yourself. In other words, consider

Reimbursements for  
relo costs are taxable.

[www.worldwideerc.org/  
resources/mobilityarticles/  
pages/0209scott.aspx](http://www.worldwideerc.org/resources/mobilityarticles/pages/0209scott.aspx)

**carefully** what you need, and carry anything that is vital for your first month abroad instead of shipping it.

Your living space at your destination may be significantly smaller than what you're used to. This is a wonderful opportunity to go zen and **de-clutter!** New technologies allow you to store countless mementos in tiny spaces to make them **portable:** If your important family photos aren't digital yet, scan them. If your music is trapped on CDs, get an iPod to upload them. If you love books, now is a good time to embrace electronic readers. As much as I love printed books, being able to carry 3,000 of them on an iPad in my purse without breaking a sweat or having to pay extra at the airline is worth it.

Also consider this question: "why would you pack and have to carry old stuff from here that you can buy new over there?" Moving light is always an option. Just keep in mind that different countries have different cleaning materials, so those new sheets will never smell like home. To rephrase the Blues Brother, "leave the sheets, **take the detergent**".

On a bodily-functions-adjacent note: toilets are different around the world. Prepare to squat, hover, and talk to WCs in China, India, and high-tech Japan. For a while, many German companies favored recycled toilet paper that was extremely rough, but thankfully advances have been made into greater softness to the **tush** touch.

## Questions for Part 1

- How long is the assignment?
- Does it make sense to sell your house?
- Are you allowed to buy in the host country?
- Can you rent your house out?
- What furniture has space to come?
- What goes into storage?
- Can anything be de-cluttered, donated, or sold?
- What foods can you buy there, what can you bring?
- Which special nutritional needs do you have to anticipate?
- What are the clothing guidelines for everyday and work events?
- Who will be the custodian of copies of birth certificates and other important family files?
- Will you bring your car, sell it, or store it?
- Who can help you with any of that?
- When will you contact them?

### Recommended Resources:

[The Expert Expat](#) – Book by Melissa Brayer Hess and Patricia Linderman incl. lists and packing tips



## Part 2 Safety – Security, Surroundings, Health

### Security

People often talk about the difference between our pre- and post-9/11 world, and it's true: the days where we could walk through an airport keeping our shoes and belts on are long gone. Whether you're interested in politics or not, when moving abroad it's a good idea to start watching the news. At least to be aware of the general history, political climate, and belief system, and their impact on the country's culture.

For **security details**, you can google CIA fact files (link in the resources) for your destination, look through Gallup crime statistics, and research information provided by local police offices.

Depending on your employer, your position, and your destination, you and your family may go through anti-abduction training. Make time in your schedules to take part in them as they may save your life.

According to the 2012 Brookfield GRS Study, India, Latin America, and China are the Top 3 developing origins.

## Surroundings

**Familiarize yourself with your new hometown's layout** and transportation options. Not all taxis may be safe to jump into, and the busses might not run during certain hours. Do you drive? Your GPS device may not always be able to connect, so make sure to carry a paper map. Once you know your way around, you can use it as wall decoration, pinning in every spot you've visited.

**Don't underestimate flora and fauna.** I made sure I was able to tell a harmless Mexican male Black Widow spider from its more dangerous female equivalent.<sup>2</sup> This helped tremendously every time I stepped into our garden to water the plants or hang up our laundry. For the first few weeks, we also kept our shoes and boots wrapped in bags, because neighbors had warned us about scorpions nesting in the shoe-caps. Spraying chemical disinfectant at regular intervals around all windows and doors eventually made us feel calmer. This is where my need for safety trumped the otherwise ecological correctness.

All this research can still not fully prepare you for **brain shock, aka culture shock**. It's emotionally challenging to live in a place where you are the obvious outsider. On the plus side, you may be more prepared for the culture shock because you are obviously different and come to expect it. It's a lot sneakier in presumably similar countries, where everyone

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<sup>2</sup> She is bigger and has red markings on her belly and sometimes on her back.

looks like you, but sounds and acts differently.

In Mexico, I considered dying my hair dark for a while just to fit in a little better. Speaking of which, if you don't know the local language, take a picture of how you like your 'do. Gesturing rarely helps your new hairdresser get the cut and color right.

## Health

Since you're moving with a company, their benefits plan will guide your care options. Ideally, you're not the first expat couple to relocate, so people who have gone before you might be able to recommend doctors once you're there. If not, ask your colleagues and neighbors for recommendations, google the specialists, look for magazine or blogs' top 10 lists, and visit more than one before making a decision.

Definitely have a final check-up before you leave, maybe even schedule follow-ups during strategically planned home visits. Depending on the country you move to, you may need vaccines to protect against infections. Be careful with prescription refills; while you may want to take a year's supply, customs might stop and arrest you for intent to distribute. Investigate the regulations for the medication you use, how much you're allowed to carry, and what the local equivalent would be.

Know your company's health plan inside out and ask about international coverage options.

## Questions for Part 2

What's the climate like, are there severe weather conditions to be aware of?

Is your wardrobe appropriate for local customs and climate?

What about vaccines, allergies, dangerous animals?

Any family medical conditions that might flare up if untreated?

Is it safe for the women and children in your family to go about their daily business alone?

If not, would your company provide a driver, a bodyguard, or self-defence lessons?

What do you know about the political, social, and economic situation of your host country?

Who can help you with any of that?

When will you contact them?

Resources:

[CIA The World Factbook](#) – Information on 267 countries

[Visa HQ](#) – Embassies Worldwide

[Clements](#) – International Health and Travel Insurance



## Part 3 Love & Belonging – Friendship, Family, Sexual Intimacy

### Friendship

Humans are wired for connection. The best way to connect to locals is to speak their language.

[www.rosettastone.com](http://www.rosettastone.com)

**Before you move, make sure you have** a good-bye ceremony to take your official leave from friends and family. Of course you'll stay in touch and God bless Facebook, but everyone will benefit from a moment of closure before moving on to the new home. It's helps to mourn what you leave behind to fully appreciate what you're moving toward.

**Prepare some social circles to move into.** Activate your networks ahead of time to introduce you to their connections. Go hit the online forums to announce your move and see who invites you to their meetings. Don't be pressured into joining any group in your first week or even your first month; it'll take some time for you to set up shop and acclimatize. But doing the legwork while you're still at home will ensure a softer landing once you get there.

**The assignees have their social group automatically built-in.** When they go to work, they have someone to go to lunch or work out with. They also have a routine from day 1. The accompanying partners have to

make their own, especially if they're not working.

**Expats are perpetual new kids on the block.** Everybody's lives and social circles are established. Think about it, when was the last time you added someone new to your group of bridge buddies? The amount of interaction you and your family members need depends on your personality preferences<sup>3</sup> for Extraversion or Introversion. Your kids will also go through friend-finding phases in their new schools, and you might have to be extra attentive for a while to make sure there's no bullying.

**As a parent,** your first source of potential new friends are other parents. When you're up for it, see if you can find someone to bond with over your child's activities. Going to the park, volunteering at the school, having play dates with neighbors can all become friend-finding missions for your young 'uns and yourself.

Without kids, you can make friends by going to work functions, the gym, the university. You've activated your networks ahead of time, now have a look around your neighborhood and go to online expat forum meets. I'll always recommend a **mixture of local and other expats**

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<sup>3</sup> Based on C G Jung's theory of personality type, we are hard-wired to be energized either by the external world, or our own internal world. Extraverts tend to enjoy interacting and engaging with the outside world, while Introverts tend to prefer responding to and reflecting on it.

**friends.** Other expats, because they know what you're going through, and locals to help you find some roots and get the inside scoop on the best restaurants and places to go.

**Keep in mind** that depending on your host culture, locals may not be keen to make friends, because they know you're only going to be there a limited amount of time. For example, in Asian countries it may take a year or two to establish trust, and if that's when your project is up, it's not worth for them to put in the work.

**The cool part is you can reinvent yourself.** You can edit out the embarrassing bits; nobody has to know your kindergarten nickname. You'll get better at telling your story the more often you go over it. By the third time you'll know when you've gone into too much detail because people's eyes glaze over. It's fun.

**The tricky part is staying in touch with old friends.** Yes, modern technology is awesome and Skype is great. But it's not the same as having a chat and a hug face-to-face. Your life is going to be different from your friends', they'll have little to compare it to, and they won't appreciate detailed accounts of your live-in housekeeper or weekend trips to Bali. Tell them what's going on with you, but pay attention to their cues of when they want to talk about their lives. Talk to your kids about this, too, because they might be told to "stop showing off", in a more direct fashion, not knowing what hit them.

**Re-activating your professional network** upon your return follows the same lines. The secret is to keep in loose touch throughout, and get more involved at least six months before you move back, or to your next destination. Unfortunately, many expats experience the “out of sight, out of mind” phenomenon. Keeping yourself on your managers’ radar might help secure you a position to move back into.

“To alcohol! The cause  
of... and solution to... all  
of life’s problems.”  
Homer Simpson  
(replace “alcohol” with “family”  
and you’re there.)

## Family

**If you’ve always had your family close**, living more than a plane-ride away will take some getting used to. If your parents are getting up there in age, or if they always used to babysit, your involvement in each other’s lives is going to change. For many expats, their family is still the first line of defense, and certainly the first source of support.

**Schedule dates and times for contact on a regular basis.** When you live abroad, you may not always be able to call them at a moment’s notice. Maybe because there’s a power outage, maybe because the cell tower and internet connection are down, or maybe because of your time-zone differences.

**Not every expat family relocates together.** Depending on where you are in life, it may make more sense not to. I have worked with many empty-nesters who negotiated longer home-leaves and frequent visits

when the spouse chose to stay behind. Maybe your children would benefit from a boarding school, or your company allows for elderly parents to accompany you – it all depends on your personal situation.

## Sexual Intimacy

Every couple's routines are different, but when you notice an interruption in yours, don't wait too long before you address it. Multiple factors influence a change in sexual appetite.

**Try and develop an understanding** for your partner's experience. Everyone is adapting to cultures differently, and while you're working on higher goals, they may still be struggling with the basic survival needs.

**Keeping a relationship alive and strong is difficult** under the best of circumstances. International relocation takes stress and tension to a whole new level, so you have to communicate and discuss your needs and fears even more openly and pro-actively.

**The two of you are a team**, now more than ever. You're in this together, and a fulfilling sex life will go a long way in affirming your commitment and improving resilience to tackle all the obstacles this assignment will throw at you. Make time for intimacy, schedule it if you have to, and spend quality time together, in and out of the bedroom.

## Questions for Part 3

Who's invited to your farewell party?

When and where can you have it, will someone host it while you're packing?

How can you help your kids say good-bye to their friends?

Which friends will you stay in touch with, and how often?

Have you taken a moment to acknowledge what you're leaving behind?

Is now a good time to start a blog to post pictures and family updates?

Which social and online networks can you activate or join?

What hobbies have forums that might also be active in the host country?

What new activities can you start in the host country?

Where do like-minded people hang out?

Are your Linked-In and other professional profiles updated?

Is it really in the best interest of the family for everyone to relocate?

Is your relationship going strong?

Would you use this assignment to avoid dealing with current problems?

What are you not saying to each other?

Who can help you with any of that?

When will you contact them?

Recommended Resources:

[Expat Women](#) – Helping Expat Women living overseas

[Internations](#) – Connecting global minds

[TCK World](#) – Third Culture Kids

[FIGT](#) – Families in Global Transition

[5 Love Languages](#) – Free Quiz and Resources for strong relationships



## Part 4 Esteem – Confidence, Achievement, Respect

### Confidence

This part is written for accompanying spouses.

We often don't get work permits. And then everything unravels.

If you are used to being employed, not earning a living changes your sense of self. America is the country of "what do you do?" and the common lack of spousal employment during international assignments is the biggest factor of discontent. Maybe you're choosing not to work, maybe you're planning on starting a family, maybe you've never worked, or maybe you didn't get a work-permit: living abroad will burst open even the tiniest cracks of self-doubt.

Become aware of your limiting beliefs that affect your self-worth. Many are tied to numbers: the scale, the bank account, or friends on Facebook. If you find yourself spiraling into negative self-talk, try a coaching process called cognitive restructuring.

Cognitive restructuring works for thoughts or beliefs that are causing you pain. It helps you examine them and find more helpful alternatives, one belief or thought at a time. Here's an example from my own experience in Mexico, where I didn't have a work permit. This

process will work for any other negative belief or thought about yourself.

What is the thought that causes pain?	I'm not working and bringing in money, so I'm useless.
How is this thought helpful?	It maintains a level of fear. I'll always want to be a useful member of society.
What do you gain by thinking it?	Motivation to find a job. But I'm not allowed to work here, so there's a disconnect and I don't know what to do. It's depressing.
What were the circumstances at the time you came up with this belief?	Well, I never came up with it, actually. Everyone just always said you HAVE to work, unemployment is somehow shameful, handouts are bad, and I believed them.
What would you lose by changing the thought?	My self-doubt and insecurity.
Are you ready to let that go?	Well, it's kind of comfortable being the victim, I don't have to do anything. But I want to let go, I don't like feeling this way.

What can you do to let it go?	I'll find a more useful belief and will repeat it every day for 30 days to make it a new habit. I'll monitor my thoughts to make sure I catch the negative ones when they're creeping in and replace them with better thoughts.
Which other thought would be less painful?	My identity and worth are independent of my income. I am a good and valuable person whatever I do.
Is there another thought that is more useful describing your situation today?	I am an accompanying partner on an international assignment. I don't have a work permit, I'm here because I love my man. This is a process and a learning opportunity. I'm doing the best I can.
Are those alternative thoughts true?	Yes, and they make me feel better, too.

Another resource for questioning the stories in your head is Byron Katie's "The Work"  
[www.thework.com](http://www.thework.com)

## Achievement

There are many ways to make a difference, even if you're not allowed to work. Learn something in the local college or through an online course. Immerse yourself in the language and culture, you'll be building marketable skills for your return! Learn to measure your contribution not in money or numbers, but in happiness, or time spent

with your kids, or memories created with your partner.

**What plans have you always postponed** that you could now make time for? Write a book, start to paint, let out all the creative energy you've been storing up.

**It is often said**, Western civilization tends to follow the "having" and "doing" path, where a person's value is measured by achievement. Eastern civilization, on the other hand, subscribes more to the concept of "being". Consider the cultural difference in the two approaches: "doing" implies a person is the steward of their own fate, there's the potential of upward mobility. "Being" implies acceptance and is often tied to the social status you're born into.

## Respect

**When you respect yourself, others will, too.** Become aware of your cultural and personality preferences to articulate your needs effectively, and develop empathy for other people's.

**Respect is a two-way street.** As an expat, you are walking, living, and breathing diversity. What were your thoughts on immigration back home? How does it feel to be a foreigner yourself?

**The more you know, the more you'll understand** what motivates our

behaviors. Learn about your own culture and the one you're moving to. Recognize behaviors are influenced by our values and our different interpretations of the same. The Golden Rule, "do unto others as you would have them do to you" does not work across cultures. Apply the **Platinum Rule** instead: "treat everyone the way they want to be treated".

Remember you are part of society and a member of mankind. While we all differ in many ways, we also have a lot in common. Release yourself from somebody else's definition of success, liberate yourself from the numbers game if it gets you down, and give yourself permission to apply your own values on what constitutes an achievement. Allow the same right for others, and respect will flow naturally.

## Questions for Part 4

How are you feeling?

Have you noticed any negative self-talk?

What's bothering you about the way other nationals go about their daily life?

How well do you know your own cultural programming?

How well do you understand the underlying values of local behavior?

Which of your own insecurities are you projecting out?

Is your mind truly open?

Who can help you with any of that?

When will you contact them?

### Recommended Resources

[Building the Life You Want LLC](#) – that's me! :-) Save time, have greater impact, increase peace of mind, and accelerate personal growth – at home and abroad

[The Expat Coach Directory](#) – Find an Expat Coach in your country



## Part 5

# Self-actualization – Morality, Creativity, Spontaneity, Problem-solving, Lack of prejudice, Acceptance of facts

**“What a man can be, he must be.”<sup>4</sup>**

The same applies to a woman.

Before we close, we must address the potential bias in Maslow's framework. Having conceived it through the lens of his own cultural background, Maslow's hierarchy cannot be applied equally to every person on the planet. For example, the need for belonging might be more important in communitarian cultures. The need for self-fulfillment takes different definitions in cultures driven by achievement or attribution, whether there's a belief in destiny or personal influence, as discussed in

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<sup>4</sup> Maslow, Abraham. Motivation and personality. Harper and Row New York, New York 1954 pg 91

Part 4. Still, I hope you found the pyramid useful as a reminder to consider priorities and potential pitfalls in international relocation.

What international assignments help us realize is that we usually function on the higher levels of what is important to us. At home, we have the basic needs covered and take them for granted. Finding yourself in a new country means you get a blank slate. A do-over. Go back to square one. And this can be quite disconcerting. Be patient with yourself, and with your family members, as they may progress through the stages at a different pace.

Our own cultural and personality type biases are always at work. If we're aware of them, they can help us grow.

This fifth level brings together the main lessons for expats from the other levels of needs in a nutshell, as moving abroad forces you to **confront critical questions**:

1. What can you eat, how can you cover yourself, and where will you sleep?
2. Is it safe, do you have to look over your shoulder, and will your family grow up healthy?
3. Whom can you trust, who will support you, will you have a mate?
4. How do you feel about yourself, what is your contribution, is there respect?
5. What is your purpose?

**An international relocation will change how you see yourself,** because it gives you new directions. If you're a spouse who has to give up working, it can interrupt your quest for achievement in your current career. But it can also open your eyes to new possibilities you never even dreamed of, put you in touch with your passion, and strengthen your relationship through shared experiences.

Most of all, it helps you practice patience, planning, and persistence. You'll learn to choose your response to tough situations. You'll be responsible for what you make of your time abroad.

There's a sense of empowerment as you flex your resilience muscles, and all these are life skills that will easily translate into other areas of leadership and personal growth as well.

At no point are you asked to give up your unique identity or cultural background. In fact, bring your diversity to the table and enjoy the synergies that arise! Being mindful of your own biases will help you differentiate between what's personal and what's cultural.

Congratulations, you are an expat!

## Questions for Part 5

What do you want to learn on this assignment?

What do you think your purpose is in this world?

Which strengths can you bring to the greater benefit of all?

What makes you feel fulfilled and your heart sing?

How can you pursue those activities while abroad?

Can you let others be great in their own way?

Who can help you with any of that?

When will you contact them?

Recommended Resources:

[A Portable Identity](#) – Book by Debra Bryson and Charise Hoge

[Global Charity Jobs](#) – International Charity and NGO recruitment

[World Chambers Network](#) – Where the World does business

## Resources

Every relocation is a unique process, so no one book can possibly prepare you for every eventuality. This eBook should be one tool of many in your DIY kit. Here are some more:

[Craig Storti](#) – Author, Cross Cultural Communication

[Robin Pascoe](#) – Author, The Expat Expert

[Jo Parfitt](#) – Author, book-cook, Expat

[SIETAR](#) – Society for Intercultural Education, Training And Research

[Intercultural Press](#) – Publishing

[Online Conversion](#) – Height, weight, length, angles, etc.

[World Electric Guide](#) – Power, outlet, adaptor, and plugs information

[UN](#) –United Nations – It's your world

[WHO](#) – World Health Organization

[UNESCO](#) –United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

[Toastmasters International](#) – Helping men and women become confident and effective speakers and leaders

## About Doris

My name is Doris Fuellgrabe, I grew up in Northern Germany, and have been an expat since 1997. So far, I have thoroughly enjoyed living in Scotland, England, Cataluña, the Canary Islands, and Mexico. My Spanish husband and I arrived in Dallas, Texas, in 2007, where I started my Expat Coaching practice Building the Life You Want LLC a year later. This is the longest I've been in one place since leaving Germany.

When I'm not coaching, writing, giving workshops on cross-cultural topics and exploring cognitive type with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, the Neuroscience of Type, or the Berens CORE™ Method, you can find me doing Yoga and Zumba at the gym, polishing my speaking skills at Toastmasters, and testing my trivia at local pub quizzes.

At the time of writing, I'm conducting independent research into how personality preferences influence cultural adaptation in expats. You can participate and contact me here:

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