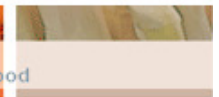
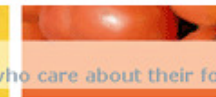
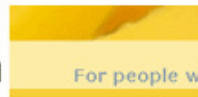


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Expat Kids - Going Out Into The Cold

by Hilly van Swol-Ubrich

The migrating season has returned upon us, the typical time of the year when questions are asked around the kitchen table: "Do we want to take on this assignment?" Be it that this major step in one's life needs careful consideration in any case - in these times and in particular this year we need to approach the issues of international mobility with even more care.

In times of geo-political unrest, yes even crisis, many corporations have had to evacuate their expat families. These families are for the most part not willing to accept another posting and the other potential candidates are reluctant to accept the offer when they have family. Here comes the problem: 45% of the expat population have children and the typical age range is 5-12.

Families often find that time quickly runs out right before the big moving day. With the immediate needs for boxes to be packed, and good-byes to be made, there is little time left to search for adequate ways to prepare the children. The young ones often find themselves in a transitional whirlwind that can leave them confused and frustrated with the uncertainties ahead.

Parents, projecting their hopes and aspirations on the children, most often deny the concerns felt by the child. "Yes, you will have to learn a new language, but you will be fine..." - "Sure, you will go to a new school, but you will make friends..." - "No, we can't take the dog - but Benny will be happy with this new family..." - "Changes? Many, but do not fret..."! Not wanting to alarm, parents tend to gloss over these issues without making them more tangible for a child.

Multiple change:

Naturally the personality and the developmental stage will vary from one child to another. Their individual needs, preferences, openness and coping skills will differ, but there is a challenge to be met even by the most flexible of children. Let's not forget: a move involves more than just changing schools, there are new systems in place, other learning styles. On top comes the total loss of reference for the child: the loss of friends.

When moving abroad this is topped by the challenges of a foreign language, a new cultural environment, a house which is not yet a home, in a period

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