



Course check in: 1pm-3pm
Course begins: 4pm
Course concludes: 1pm on the final day
Schedule your travel appropriately

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

For international school counselors

London 20-24 June 2017

Welcome to the 2017 Introduction to Essential Skills for International School Counselors Course!

During the short, intensive time we are together, we will focus on the personal and professional competencies and skills necessary for international school counselors and the programs we deliver. We cover a broad range of topics and it is a lot to take in. During each day's session, you can plan to think and work hard, learn a lot, and have fun. Dress casual and bring layers!

We can't wait to get started on this with you!

All the best from your facilitators,

The Steves... Hisler and Ayling (short intros below)

Here are a few important considerations to ensure a meaningful and successful course experience for all:

PREPARE

Leading up to your arrival on 20 June, there are a few things you need to be working on. We all get busy in the weeks leading up to the end of the school year. The same is true for the Steves! Use the following task list to get yourself ready:

1. **Top Priority – Fill out the Introduction to Essential Skills for the International School Counselors [Google Form](#).** Your completed form is an essential piece of our planning puzzle!
2. **Gather Materials.** Have access to the following materials electronically, to share with others during the course:
 - Job description for your school's Counseling (or pastoral) position
 - Samples of articles, announcements, notices/handouts generated by the Counseling Office, transitions programs, admissions, advisory, etc.
 - Referral process - any forms or guidelines you have for this process
 - Booklets, parent letters, handouts, etc. generated by the Counseling Office
 - Transition materials from your school - for parents, students and teachers
 - Any information/format for meetings you have about students. (We call them Student Study Team 'SST' Meetings)
 - Intake materials used for new students and their parents
3. **Case Studies.** Bring at least two written (no more than one page) case studies or vignettes dealing with a counseling problem or situation you have confronted during your career. These can be written in a simple narrative format or following a format/template with which you prefer to work. Information to provide may include:
 - a description of the presenting concern
 - resources you accessed in responding to the case
 - a description of your response/strategies implemented
 - a summary of how the situation currently stands
 - questions you may like the group to consider.
4. **Read *Third Culture Kids (Chapter 14-Dealing with Transition)*, by David C. Pollock & Ruth E. Van Reken, Nicholas Brealey, North America, 2001.** If you have access to the full book, Chapters 3, 15, and 16 will serve as the basis for part of our work on Transitions. If you can, read the entire book; it's a gem!

WATCH

... a [short video](#) to prepare for your course.

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If you need help with this process, please contact us at registrations@theptc.org.



BRING

BRING A LAPTOP (REQUIRED)

Your course materials are electronic. Hard copies of the materials will not be available on site. Bring a laptop computer with appropriate adapters and wireless internet capability. [Click here](#) for more information about iPads and tablets. Chromebook users can use the free [Kami extension](#) to annotate.

- Download [Adobe Reader DC](#) now in order to be able to access your materials properly.

CONTRIBUTE

In an effort to ‘cash in’ on the experience of the people enrolled in the course, participants will also be encouraged to contribute at least **one** of the following:

- Sharing a Gem is one of the first things we will do each morning. These gems are brief statements of learning, insights, a-ha moments that could be course or course-material related.
- A warm-up activity you have run with teachers, students or parents that worked well. Should involve minimum props/materials and take no more than five minutes to run. Why? Warm up activities can set the tone and get people focused/interested. Between the ones you run in the afternoons and the ones we run each morning you should go home with a large coterie of warm-up activities.
- Being a Guide on the Side by sharing a brief presentation or talk you have given in the counseling/advisory context. This can be a power point, a walk through a hand out, or a prepared talk about a counseling related topic. Why? Sharing ideas with the class and establishing yourself as a resource person for the class and schools world-wide are desired outcomes for the course.
- Facilitation of an afternoon breakout group- The last hour of each day is spent in smaller groups working through case studies, making further sense of the material covered, sharing ideas and making connections. Each of these groups needs a facilitator.

We can't wait to get started on this with you!

All the best,

Steve Hisler and Steve Ayling

Steve Ayling, currently a High School Counselor at International School Manila, Philippines, is in his 17th year of education. He hails originally from Birmingham, UK, earning his B.Ed. (Hons) in 1999 from Exeter University and his Master's (MSc) from the State University of New York in 2010. Steve has also earned his Certification of International School Counseling through the Counselor Training Center (CTC) Program and is thrilled to be co-teaching his second CTC course this summer with Steve Hisler! Steve is also a member of the American School's Counselor Association (ASCA) and a qualified Life Coach through the International Coach Federation (ICF).

Steve Hisler (mrhisler@gmail.com) is privileged to facilitate this course for the past two years. He is currently on sabbatical. Previously, he was the Primary School Counselor for Copenhagen International School. Before that, he was an Elementary Counselor at the American School in Japan, The American School of Kuwait, and in the public school system in the United States. Active participation, sharing of perspectives, and networking with school counselors from all over the globe are his favorite aspects of this course. They both work hard and learn a great deal in an atmosphere filled with support, fun, and even a bit of music! They appreciate that you are taking time away from your summer holiday to share and learn with them, and we are looking forward to working with you in Miami!

Pollock, David C., and Van Reken, Ruth E., *The Third Culture Kid Experience – Growing Up among Worlds, Revised Edition* (2009)
Nicholas Brealey Publishing, USA

Chapter 14 - Dealing with Transition

My husband, one-year-old, and I once traveled to Portugal with another couple. All the adults were over 5 feet 10 inches tall, and my friend was 6 months pregnant. We were a group of very large and imposing people walking down the small ancient streets. The townspeople looked at us rather warily. Then my daughter, wearing a straw hat, sitting happily in her backpack carrier, would poke her head around my husband's and give a big, silly smile. The warmth spread through the street, and suddenly we felt welcomed.

Life abroad with an infant is different from life abroad in any other stage of life. Make it work for you!

-Anne P. Copeland, from Global Baby

As Anne discovered, transition with TCKs (third culture kids) often starts when they are infants. She writes, "The fact that I moved to London with a toddler and had a baby while there was the defining feature to my overseas assignment." And think of what it did for her daughters. From their earliest moments, they were living a global lifestyle.

Another part of building a strong foundation for TCKs is making sure highly mobile families learn to deal well with the entire process of transition. Parents and others in the community, including teachers and school staff, can work proactively to deal with the losses inherent in any transition experience, for their TCKs as well as for themselves. Families who learn to do this not only help their children be able to move ahead with confidence, but also give them great tools for living in an increasingly mobile world. We won't be able to stop these new patterns of mobility- nor should we- but that's why it's so important to learn to navigate them well.

In chapter 5 we discussed the common characteristics of the five stages in any transition experience: involvement, leaving, transition, entering, and re-involvement. Keep in mind that everyone in the family will go through these stages at different rates, and it's not always a simple forward direction for anyone. It's also important for those who will be remaining behind to be involved in positive plans for the upcoming transition. No one in the family or community escapes the impact of mobility. For simplicity's sake, however, we will again offer suggestions mainly for making this as smooth an event as possible for the family who itself is leaving. Here, then, are some concrete ways parents and their TCKs can not only survive transition, but also grow in the process.

From Involvement through Leaving

The time has finally come. After carefully thinking through the pros and cons, the decision is made: the family will be moving to a new place and, for many TCKs, a new world. With that decision, each member of the family moves from the comfortable transition stage of involvement they have hopefully been in to the leaving stage. Whether this move is between countries or even to a new location in the same country, leaving is a critical stage for everyone to navigate well.

Some parents have asked us when is the best time to let the kids know. A few tell us they don't want to let their children know at all.

After listening to Dave talk about transition at one conference, a woman came up to him and said, “Do you really believe it is better to let the kids know ahead of time? Our children had an awful time moving for our last relocation. My husband just found out we’ll be changing countries again and we’ve decided not to tell them ahead of time. We plan to send the children to my parents in another country, go back to our home, pack up, move, then get the kids again and take them to the new place. What’s wrong with that plan?”

Dave wanted to say, “Everything!!!” but he restrained himself and tried to remind this woman that no matter when the children discovered they were moving, it would be hard for them. But it would be a thousand times worse if they never had a chance to say good-bye to the world where they now lived. In addition, how would her children ever trust her or her husband again in the future any time they sent the children to visit their grandparents?

We believe that once parents know a move is on the horizon and it is okay for it to be public knowledge in the community, children should be told. Older children who can be trusted with knowledge a corporation or embassy may not yet want public about a parent’s assignment may, of course, be told when the parents first know. As we said earlier, knowing in advance gives everyone a good opportunity to begin the necessary process of both closure in the present environment and proper anticipation of the new.

This leaving stage is a critical one to do well if parents want not only to make the current transition as smooth as possible, but also to help their children grown in the process rather than become stuck in some of the challenges we have mentioned already. Since denials – of parents, TCKs, or those of friends around is – and moments of special recognition, such as graduation or farewell ceremonies, don’t change the ultimate reality of this leave-taking, it’s essential that all involved – parents, TCKs, teachers, friends, others in the community – face and deal with the normal grief inherent in leaving a place and people we love. Doing this rather than running away from it will allow a healthy transition process to continue. We also need to look ahead realistically and optimistically. How can we do both: face our approaching losses squarely while still looking forward with hope? The best way is by making sure we go through proper closure during this leaving stage. Without that, the rest of the transition process can be very bumpy indeed, and settling on the other side will be much more difficult. *Leaving right is a key to entering right.*

BUILDING A “RAFT”

The easiest way to remember what’s needed for healthy closure is to imagine building a raft. By lashing four basic “logs” together, we will be able to keep the raft afloat and get safely to the other side.

- **Reconciliation**
- **Affirmation**
- **Farewells**
- **Think destination**

Reconciliation. Any time we face a move from one place to another, it’s easy to deal with tensions in relationships by ignoring them. We think, “In two weeks I’ll be gone and never see that friend again anyway. Why bother trying to work out this misunderstanding?” Children can do the same in their own ways, particularly if they have begun to withdraw emotionally from the current place.

Unfortunately, when we refuse to resolve interpersonal conflicts from the past or new conflicts that arise as we unconsciously “lean away,” two things can happen. First, we are so focused on how good it will be to get away from this problem that we not only skip over the reconciliation needed for good closure, but we also ignore the total process of closure and don’t move on to building the rest of the RAFT. Second, the difficulties don’t go away when we move. Instead, as we leave, we carry with us our mental baggage of unresolved problems. This is a poor choice for three reasons: bitterness is never healthy for anyone; the old discontentment can interfere with starting new relationships; and if we ever move back to this same place and have to face these people again, it will be much harder to resolve the issues then. We’ve met some ATKCs (adult third culture kids) who refuse to attend school reunions because they still

don't want to meet certain people who hurt them or whom they know they also hurt. What a sad memory to carry throughout a lifetime.

Reconciliation includes both the need to forgive and to be forgiven. How that happens may vary among cultures. In one culture, it might mean going directly to the person with whom we have a conflict and addressing the issues. In another culture, it may mean using an intermediary. Obviously, true reconciliation depends on the cooperation and response of the other party as well, but we at least need to do all we can to reconcile any broken relationships before leaving. For children, it can be different from adults. If parents or others see that children have an unresolved conflict, they will likely have to try to help the child toward some sort of resolution. Perhaps simply talking with the child, seeing if there might be a time to get the child together with the friend or teacher with whom they are struggling, or finding some other way to help that child see the other person in a new light can be helpful in the long term of that child's life. It's amazing how long children can remember that particular pain of the shame from a teacher or bullying from a fellow student in a way that keeps them bound with anger for years.

Affirmation. Relationships are built and maintained through affirmation – the acknowledgement that each person in this relationship matters. Again, styles or customs of affirmation vary from culture to culture and may be expressed differently according to the age of each child, but in every culture, in every age bracket, an important part of closure is to let others know we respect and appreciate them. Here are several suggestions for ways families can do this.

1. *Have children identify who their special teachers or other favorite adults in the community are.* Encourage them to use pictures from a magazine to make a collage or have them draw a picture showing something they like best about being in this teacher's class or why this other adult is such a favorite.
2. *Encourage children to think of something they might like to give a friend as a small memento to represent a special time they have shared or that represents their special friendship.*
3. *As a family, send a note with a small gift to your neighbors to let them know what you've learned about kindness, faith, love, or perseverance through your interactions with them.*
4. *When leaving family members behind, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, help children write specific reasons they appreciate being that person's grandchild, niece, nephew, or cousin, and then deliver the note with some flowers the children help to pick out.*

Obviously, there are countless other ways to show affirmation. The point is that acknowledging others helps us as well as those we affirm. It not only solidifies our relationships for future contact, but in expressing what they have meant to us, we are reminded of what we have gained from living in this place. Part of good closure is acknowledging our blessings – both to rejoice in them and to properly mourn their passing.

Farewells. Saying good-bye to people, places, pets, and possessions in culturally and age-appropriate ways is important if we don't want to have deep regrets later. We need to schedule time for these farewells during the last few weeks and days.

One woman forgot to take into account that in the local culture everyone must come to the departing friend's house on the last day to bid a final farewell. In order not to offend the countless people who streamed in all day long, she visited with each one in turn. By the end of her day, her bags still weren't packed and she missed her flight!

Here are some suggestions for saying farewell in four key areas (all of which just happen to begin with p): people, places, pets, possessions.

- *People:* Farewells to significant people in our lives are crucial. Parents should take special care to help their children say good-bye to people with whom they have had meaningful relationships in the past as well as the present, including those from the local community who may have been caregivers. Helping kids say good-bye may include things like baking a few cookies with them to give to that special person. Brave parents sometimes schedule a party or overnight so their children can have a final chance to say good-bye to close friends. When times are planned for intentionally saying farewell, anticipating those special times can go a long way toward

helping children avoid the excessive pulling away that can lead to those long-term consequences we discussed earlier.

- *Places*: Everyone has places that evoke an emotional response. It may be a spot tied to a special moment in our lives (our engagement, for instance) or where we go when we are upset or where certain events always occur. These are the places we come back to visit and show our children years later. Part of healthy closure includes visiting such sites to reminisce and say farewell. This is particularly important for TCKs who may be losing their whole world with next week's plane ride. Many TCKs we have talked to mourn for the favorite tree they used to climb years after they have left the land of their childhood. People say good-bye to places in different ways. Some plant a tree that will grow long after they are gone, symbolizing a living, ongoing connection to this part of their lives. Others leave a hidden secret message or "treasure" to look for in case they should return. No matter how it is done, openly acknowledging this time as a true good-bye is important, as is recognizing that this stage in life and all that these places represent to us are passing.
- *Pets*: Pets aren't equally important in every culture, but they can be significant when it comes to good-byes. TCKs need to know how their pets will be cared for and who will love them. If the pet must be put to sleep, everyone who cares for that pet, particularly children, should say good-bye. Some TCKs tell us how devastated they were after parents promised their pet would be happy in a new home, only to find out months or years later that the dog was euthanized or the chicken given to someone for food.
- *Possessions*: One problem (some might say blessing!) international sojourners face is that they can rarely take all their possessions with them when they move. Parents may delight in the chance to throw out a child's dirty rock collection, never realizing how precious those rocks were to their child. Certainly, we realize part of life is letting go, but parents should talk with their children about that to take and what to leave as they pack. Everyone in the family needs to carry some treasured items to the new location. These become part of the collection of *sacred objects* that help connect one part of a global nomad's life to the next. But sometimes even treasures must be left behind. When that happens, it's important to part with them consciously. Placing a precious object in the hands of someone else as a gift or taking photographs of it are two ways to say good-bye to an inanimate but important old friends.

The celebratory rituals of farewell commonly associated with certain types of transition, such as graduations or retirement parties, are another important part of building this raft. Taking the time for "rites of passage" gives us markers for remembering meaningful places and people and directly addressing the fact that we are saying farewell.

This normal pattern can be complicated for internationally mobile families. Many of them permanently return to their home country after the oldest child graduates from secondary school abroad. The graduating TCK goes through the rites of passage – the graduation ceremony, and the "wailing wall" afterward, where all line up and say good-bye to one another. However, the needs of the younger children for the same type of closure when they leave for the passport country are often overlooked. This can later add greatly to the younger child's sense of "unfinished business," while the older TCK in the same family is off and running once he or she gets to the homeland. Remember, *every* member of the family needs to build the RAFT during any leaving process.

Think destination. Even as we are saying the good-byes and processing the sad reality of those good-byes, we need to think realistically about our destination: Where are we going? What are some of the positives and negatives we can expect to find once we get there? Will we have electricity and running water? How will we learn to drive on the other side of the road? Do we need to take a transformer with us to keep our 110-volt appliances from burning out on a 220-volt electrical system?

This is also the time to look at our external (e.g., finances, family support structure) and internal (e.g., ability to deal with stress or change) resources for coping with problems we might encounter. What resources will we find in the new location and what will we need to take with us? Who can help us adjust to the new culture when we get there? This is the best time to find out from the sponsoring agency who will meet us at the airport, where we will stay until housing is located, and what that housing will be.

While these are primarily the concerns parents need to consider, thinking destination is equally important for children. Practical things such as maps, pictures of the next house or school, details of the upcoming itinerary, and places that

may be visited along the way are all helpful tools parents can use to help children think and plan ahead. Increasingly, there are books like those Beverly Roman and others have written for preteens and young children in this leaving stage to use in this process, such as *The League of Super Movers* and *My Family Is Moving*. If at all possible, this is also a great time to try to make contact with other families or children who are in the new place or are already attending the new school so that mentors are already being put in place.

If we don't think through some of these issues, the adjustment for all members of the family may be rockier than it needs to be once we arrive at the new destination. If we are expecting too much, we'll be disappointed. If we don't expect enough, we may not use the resources available, thereby making life more complicated than necessary. Of course, we can never have a perfect picture of what life in the new place will be like, and we must always recognize that each member of the family will go through the stages of transition at a different pace, but doing our best to prepare beforehand can prevent a lot of problems later on.

After all of this thorough preparation in the leaving stage, it's time to move on into the transition stage itself.

Maintaining Stability through the Transition Stage

When people ask how they can avoid chaos and confusion during the transition process, we have to say they can't. They can, though, keep in mind that it's a normal stage and it will pass if they hang on long enough. Also, there are a few steps we can take to help us maintain some sense of equilibrium and connectedness with the past and to smooth the way for the future stages of entry and reinvolverment.

One way is through the use of sacred objects – those mementos we mentioned earlier that specifically reflect a certain place or moment of our lives. That's why the choice of which possessions to keep and which to give away is so important during the leaving stage. A favorite teddy bear pulled out of the suitcase each night during the travels from one place to another reminds the child that there is one stable thing in his or her life amidst the general chaos. At the same time, Mom or Dad may be reading a treasured book they bought along, which reminds them of other times and places where they have read those same inspiring or comforting words.

Other sacred objects are worn. Did you ever look around a group of TCKs or their parents and see how many were wearing some article of clothing or jewelry that connected them to their past? It might be a Tuareg cross hanging on a gold chain or a V-ring on a finger. Perhaps they're wearing a sari instead of a sweater. Often an ATCK's home is quite a sight to behold – with artifacts gathered from around the world, all proving that "I was there! It's part of my history." Each sacred object serves as a good reminder that the current moment or scene is part of a bigger story of that person's life.

Pictures are another way we connect with special moments and memories in our past. One ambassador asked each staff member to list what he or she would put in the one bag allowed for an emergency evacuation. Photographs headed the list for every person, far above things with much more monetary worth. Why? Because each picture reminds us of some relationship, an experience we have had, a place we have visited. Pictures add a value to our lives that money alone can't buy. A small picture album with photographs representing significant highlights of our past life and location gives us a lovely place to visit when we need a few reflective moments in the middle of this sometimes turbulent stage. Pictures can also be helpful for letting people in the new place know something more of our history.

Of course, we recognize that everyone we would like to show these pictures and sacred objects to may not see the same value in them that we do. (And often it's vice versa when they try to show us theirs!) Why don't most people particularly enjoy another person's PowerPoint or video show? Because friends who weren't there can't see anything interesting in a skinny cow walking down the middle of the road; it seems rather bizarre to them. And they certainly don't want to hear a twenty-minute story about the man with the shaved head in the back row of a group picture. For the person who was there, though, that picture or video segment brings back a flood of memories, and every detail is fascinating. That's why globally nomadic people should make a pact to look at each other's slide or home videos. It's how they can affirm their experiences!

Another thing we sometimes forget in this stage is to take time to "stop and smell the roses." Often we are flying from one spot to the next, suddenly living amid strange customs and languages. While it can be overwhelming, it can also be seen as a wonderful time of exploration. We may not feel ready to settle in yet, but surely we can at least be interested observers. There is much to learn, and to help TCKs learn, about the cultures and places in which we are living on any given day during transition.

Even if we built our RAFT perfectly in the leaving stage and enjoy observing the new world around us, transition is the stage where we often begin to mourn most acutely the loss of things and people left behind. If we think back to the grief cycle we discussed in chapter 12, up until now we have likely been in the denial and bargaining stages, maybe with some anger along the way – but even there, the anger is often directed at those we are leaving behind as part of our preparation for the upcoming separation. Transition is the stage where the sadness and possible depression can hit. We feel unbearable emptiness when we realized we can't call our best friend to meet us for a cup of coffee. We miss the comfort of knowing everyone in our factory or office by name. The permanence of the move and the irretrievability of the past stare us in the face and we wonder if we've made a terrible mistake.

During the leaving stage we knew these losses were coming, but now their reality is here. This is a critical moment and one that can affect any or all members of the family for years to come. Parents must decide what to do with their own grief as well as that they see in their children. Will they deal with it or try to pack it away – out of sight, out of mind? In particular, will they choose to comfort their children at this point or only try to cheer them up? Sometimes the chaos of the moment is so great we simply can't afford to deal fully with the reality of what we are losing, and our only choice to survive seems to be to ignore those feelings. Parents who are not willing to look at their own losses will be unable to help their children. Some children may not be able or ready to do anything but block out the past and survive at this point. That is a common means of getting through this transition stage, and that is okay in the short run. But when that happens, at some point everyone in the family must be willing to go back and do some appropriate mourning for the losses just endured. Too many people get through transition by packing away these painful feelings of loss and never taking them out consciously at a later stage. This is what winds up years later in the issues related to unresolved grief that we have mentioned earlier.

While some people try to survive the transition stage by ignoring their losses, other people, of course, seem to be able to deal more easily with the losses as they are happening. Whenever we choose to deal with the inevitable losses in our move – during this stage itself or later – it is important at some point to mourn the losses we have known even while affirming all the good that is ahead.

MOURNING THE LOSSES

But what, in fact, is mourning? How is it different from grief? A professor of philosophy, Jim Gould, says that loss always produces grief, consciously or unconsciously, and that it will come out one way or another, whether the person intends it to or not. Mourning, however, is the conscious acknowledgement of loss. Because of that, he believes those living these globally nomadic lifestyles need to develop better rituals of mourning to help in that process of dealing with grief intentionally rather than suppressing it. All the suggestions we offered for helping us build the RAFT might also be cited as these rituals of mourning. Some families develop a particular ritual, such as going out to a favorite local restaurant the last night before leaving each location and always ordering pizza.

Entering Right

Physical arrival alone doesn't mean we have begun the entering stage. Sometimes the chaos of the transition stage remains for some days or weeks after our initial arrival. The more we have thought ahead about this time, however, and the more we are consciously aware of what we and our family will need to make a positive entry into this place, the sooner and smoother we can begin to positively move into our new life. It's important for everyone involved, however, to recognize that they don't have to wait helplessly around for the new community to reach out and receive them. There are many ways we can proactively help ourselves in this process. So how, then, can we (and the new community) move from the desire to establish ourselves in our new community to actually accomplishing it?

CHOOSING AND USING MENTORS

The key to successfully negotiating the entry stage, particularly in an international or cross-cultural move, is to find a *mentor* – someone who answers questions and introduces the new community to us and us to it. These mentors function as “bridges” and can smooth our way in, significantly shorten the time it takes for us to get acclimated to the new surroundings, and help us make the right contacts. They can also give tips for the unspoken and unseen “do's and don'ts” that are operative in this new community and culture.

The problem, of course, lies in finding the *right* mentor, both for parents and children. After all, the mentor is the person who determines the group of people all members of the family will meet, the attitude each of us will absorb about this new place, and the ones from whom we learn the acceptable behavioral patterns. Ultimately, the mentor not only can affect the long-term relationships both adults and children may have to this new community but often determines our effectiveness in it as well. If we find the right one, we're in great shape.

The wrong mentor, however, can be a disaster – doing for us the exact opposite of what a good mentor would do. If our mentor is negative about the place, its people, the school, or the sponsoring organization/corporation, we begin to doubt whether we should have come and become afraid to try new things. Even worse, if the chosen, or self-assigned, mentor has a bad reputation in the community, others may put us in the same category and avoid us as well.

This issue of finding the right mentor is particularly critical for TCKs as they move into a new place. At the very time when they are in the position of being “outsiders,” often those who are also on the fringes of the receiving community will be the first to introduce themselves to a newcomer. They, too, may be looking for friends while others belonging to the “in” group already have their cadre of friends nicely established and may not be interested in adding more. TCKs or any new arrivals to a school or community are, of course, so happy *someone* has reached out to them that they can easily jump into a new relationship before understanding what the ramifications of such a relationship might be.

How can any newcomer know who is or isn’t trustworthy as a mentor? How can all members of the family make a wise decision at this point?

Our suggestion is to be appreciative and warm to all who reach out a helping hand during this entry time, but inwardly to be cautious about making a whole-hearted commitment to this relationship before asking a few questions: Is this person one who fits into the local community or is he or she definitely marginalized in one way or another? Does this person exhibit the positive, encouraging attitudes you would like to foster in your family, or does this person make negative remarks and display hostile attitudes about almost everything?

When we take a little time to evaluate a potential mentor, we may discover that this person who greeted us so warmly is, in fact, one of those wonderful people who belong to the heart of any organization, school, or community and has the great gift of making newcomers feel almost instantly at home. That person could well go on to be the best possible mentor in the world for any particular member of the family and be a great friend. If, however, we find out that this person who is so eager to befriend us or our TCKs is a marginal member of the community, then we must ask the next question: Why do they want to befriend us?

Some are marginal simply because they, like us, are relative newcomers and are still looking to establish new friendships. While they may not yet be members of the inner circle, they have learned the basics of how life is lived in this place and can be most helpful. In fact, they often have more time to spend orienting newcomers than those whose plates are already full with well-defined roles and relationships. Relationships that start like this often turn into lifelong friendships.

If, however, we find out that the first person who approaches us, and particularly our TCKs, so invitingly has been intentionally marginalized from the community, we need to be cautious about adopting this person as a mentor. Such people are often in some kind of trouble within the community. Perhaps they rebel against the accepted standard of behavior, break laws, or defy teachers, and they often want to recruit naïve newcomers for their own agenda.

Besides using our common sense in situations such as we have just described, there are other ways to try to find good mentors. We can make use of any active mentoring programs already in place. Some agencies or corporations set up “matching families” for those coming to their community. One potential problem is that an organization may have a mentoring program for the adults in the family, but the children’s need for a mentor is forgotten. In such cases, parents may need to be more proactive and ask those in the human resources or employee care departments of their organization if they can give the names of possible families to contact in the next posting. Many international schools have set up a “big brother/big sister” program, with good mentors already identified, to help new students through their first few weeks at school. Getting involved with such things as parent/teacher groups can be a way for parents to meet other parents and help to find informal mentors if no formal mentoring programs are available.

One thing to note, however. In communities with chronically high mobility, we have noticed two interesting, though rather opposite, responses to newcomers. Some, like those just mentioned, have a regular routine to help new members get oriented. There are maps of the town with the key places to shop marked and instruction guides for

dealing with the local host culture – all tucked in a basket of goodies. One person is specifically assigned to take the new family around, and the whole system of orientation goes like clockwork because it has happened so many times. It's great when your family relocates to such a community.

On the other hand, members of other highly mobile communities are so tired of seeing people come and go, they basically don't do much at all for the newcomer. Their thought process goes like this: "What's the use? These people will just be gone again," or "Why bother getting to know them? I've only got three months left here myself." Such an attitude makes it more difficult, of course, for newcomers, who can then begin to feel very angry and withdraw from others too. But with some understanding of why others may seem cautious, and with some patient persistence to reach out to new acquaintances, or by inviting families with children of like ages over for an evening, in time it is possible even in these communities to find a way into a positive sense of belonging to this new place.

Most of our discussion on this entry stage applies to any kind of move. But there are extra stresses recognized by experts around the world for those trying to enter a completely new culture – which is the nature of most transitions for third culture families. Lisa and Leighton Chinn, a couple who work with international students, have outlined four stages of cultural stress that occur during this phase: fun, flights, fight, and fit. It's important to acknowledge these extra stages, because they often happen in spite of all we have done right to prepare for our move and can make us feel that none of our other preparations mattered. The process can go something like this – sort of a second transition cycle within the larger first transition process.

As we have looked ahead, we have developed a sense of anticipation and excitement for our new assignment. We decide it will be *fun* to explore the new environment, learn its history, and enrich our lives through meeting new people. The first few days after arrival, we busily engage with all we meet, feel excitement that we can actually answer the greetings in this new language we tried to study before we came, and all seems well. We think, "What fun!" A few more days pass, however, and things aren't quite as exciting. We don't like not knowing how to get to the store on our own because we haven't learned yet how to drive on the "wrong" side of the road, we're tired of not being understood past simply greetings by those around us, and we wish we could go "home" – back to that place where we knew how to function and where we fit. This is the *flight* stage.

Soon, however, we get tired of feeling so useless or out of place and begin to get angry. After all, we used to fit. We were competent individuals where we used to live so it can't be our fault that we feel so lost and insecure, and we begin to blame everything and everyone in this new place for our discomfort. If they would only do things "right" (meaning the way we used to do them), everything would be fine. Internally, and sometimes externally, we begin to *fight* with the way things are being done here – perhaps even becoming angry at our mentor who is doing his or her best to teach us these new ways.

Knowing these reactions might happen doesn't necessarily stop them, but, again, knowledge helps us at least make more appropriate choices. In this case we might choose not to be quite so vocal about all we despise in our new situation!

These are the moments we need to remind ourselves that entry also takes time, to remember that six months from now we can presume that somehow we will have learned to drive here, discovered where the stores are for the things we want to buy, and most likely have made new friends by then. At that point, once again we will *fit*.

Reinvolvement Stage

The light at the end of the proverbial tunnel is that in any transition, cross-cultural or not, a final, recognized stage of reinvolvement is possible. We settle into our new surroundings, accepting the people and places for who and what they are. This doesn't always mean that we like everything about the situation, but at least we can start to see *why* people do what they do rather than only *what* it is they do. We've learned the new ways and know our position in this community. Other members of the group see us as one of them, or at least they know where we fit. We have a sense of intimacy, a feeling that our presence matters to this group, and once more we feel secure. Time again feels present

and permanent as we focus on the here and now rather than hoping for the future or constantly reminiscing about the past.

Lessons from the TCK Petri Dish

In all transitions, we gain as well as lose. While all CCKs (cross-culture kids) may not have the international mobility that TCKs know, everyone alive goes through big and little transitions all the time. Perhaps one more paradox of the TCK experience is that learning to deal in healthy ways with the losses of transition can become a great asset in a TCK's life, both for themselves and for others. Having language and concepts to understand this basic process gives further clarity to situations that would otherwise seem completely unrelated.

ATCK Latasha told us that during her bout with breast cancer, knowing about the transition cycle was key in helping her deal with it. She realized with the initial news of the diagnosis that she was in the "leaving" phase – moving from life as it had been to life in the world of chemo and radiation cycles she didn't yet know. As she faced the prospects ahead, she saw how she needed to deal not only with her potential loss of life, but the many hidden losses also entailed in such a time as this: the loss that she could not be involved in the day-to-day activities of life with her friends as she was used to doing; the loss that her record of near-perfect health was now forever gone; and the loss of her sense of identity – that when others saw her bald head, they would see "cancer patient" rather than Latasha.

She found this insight extremely helpful as she went through the different feelings of her treatment phase of chemo and radiation. She could name this as the transition stage – the old world was gone and what lay ahead remained unclear. Survival was the goal for each day, knowing another stage was coming. At the end of her treatments, she realized she had moved into the entry, or perhaps reentry, phase. Life had gone on without her in her former world; how would she find her way back in? "With intentionality," meaning it was up to her to reach out to others as well as expecting them to reach out to her. She did so and feels totally reinvolved at this stage.

Latasha's story demonstrates what we mean when we say learning to deal constructively with the challenges of the TCK experience can translate them into strengths for our lives as well. As not only TCKs but also others continue to understand this basic human process, we can understand why we no longer have to shut down our emotions or shut out relationships. Instead, all of us – TCKs, CCKs, adults of all background – can risk the pain of another loss for the sake of the gain that goes with it, because we know how to get from one side to the other. Learning to live with this kind of openness affects all areas of life in a positive way and does, indeed, turn this challenge into one more strength.