

The Assignee Partner and Family

Navigating the Global
Journey Together





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Introduction

The inspiration for this book has come from hundreds, even thousands of assignees, both partners—employed or not—and the Global Mobility professionals who work tirelessly to make their international assignments a truly positive growth experience.

This book originated back to RW3 CultureWizard's beginnings, and even before, when we developed the first Assignee Spouse survey and were writing and speaking on the topic all over the world. Although there have been many changes in the assignee partner population and in the services companies offer to assignees, human needs and challenges remain the same.

In 2001, when we started RW3 CultureWizard, it became clear that focusing on the entire assignment process, with specific attention to the partner and the family, was Best Practice. Cultural training for the entire family was, and still is, at the core of a successful international assignment.

From our foundation, RW3 CultureWizard has included spouse, partner and family cultural adjustment training, and has referred families to appropriate services. The stories we hear back from these families reinforce the impact and significance of partner engagement in the assignment planning, training and continuation.

As our experience frequently points out, Assignee Family Adjustment is pivotal to the success of an international assignment. And, given the cost of that assignment, it's more than prudent for companies to actively support their successful adjustment.

This book is written for both the partner, the family and the HR professional who supports them. Based on hundreds of interviews, years of research, and a deep cultural knowledge, it's loaded with advice, stories and tips that can help both assignee families and HR program administrators.

Cultural adaptation is a matter of understanding behavioral differences and accepting the different perspectives and values from diverse people around the world. Fully appreciating those differences will enhance your experience and help make an assignee assignment the wonderful life experience it can be.

Reframing the Role: From Accompanying to Co-Leader

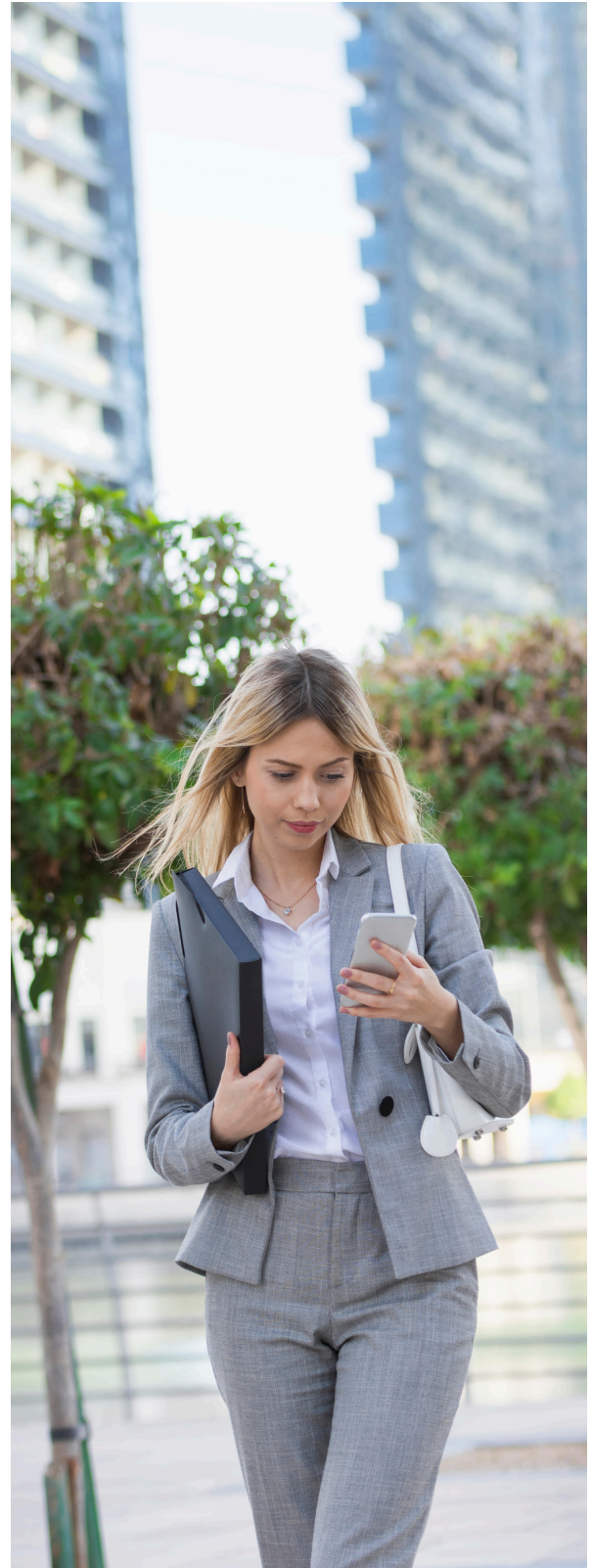
Charlotte's journey as an assignee partner started with excitement: a sense of adventure for herself, anticipation for her two children, and pride in her husband's new role. But she quickly realized that their relocation was about far more than a change of scenery. Housing, schools, community, and culture—everything changed.

A successful financial analyst back home, Charlotte found herself questioning her identity and daily purpose. She could dwell on what she had left behind, or she could embrace the opportunity. She chose the latter, relying on personal resilience and professional resources.

Charlotte's story reflects what data confirms: the partner's adjustment is central to whether an international assignment thrives or fails.

When your partner is offered an international assignment, it's often described as a golden career opportunity. And it can be. But if, as a partner, you're also stepping into a new country alongside them, whether as a professional in your own right, a stay-at-home parent, or someone in between, you know this move affects your life just as profoundly.

Whatever your background or gender, you'll likely spend those first weeks helping your family settle in: navigating housing, schools, learning the new community, confronting cultural differences, and often hampered by a language barrier.



After settling in, you're likely to face an array of issues that aren't usually addressed in the initial corporate briefing by HR when assignees are given the details of their assignment. And then, when you actually get settled, the employed assignee is doing work in a familiar organizational setting, children adjust to their schooling, and the partner is facing the new environment and living in the culture every moment. It's entirely new and different.

An international experience is one of life's great adventures, and like any adventure it's full of excitement, challenges and satisfaction. This guide will help you prepare for the exciting, sometimes overwhelming, journey ahead. You'll find insights and practical steps to help the assignee's family have a successful international experience.

Moving abroad is a family journey. It is an adventure filled with excitement, but also stress and uncertainty. The aim of this guide is not to deny those difficulties, but to offer encouragement and strategies for managing them.

You'll hear voices of other partners: their challenges, their discoveries, and their resilience. You may recognize parts of yourself in their stories. Some found purpose in unexpected ways, others discovered new confidence, and many struggled with questions of identity and belonging. Drawing on decades of interviews, case studies and years of research, you will see that you are not alone, and that the challenges you face are both real and surmountable. With preparation, support, and creativity, you can transform the experience into a time of growth for yourself and your family.



**Moving abroad is a family journey.
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filled with excitement,
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Reframing the Role: From Accompanying to Co-Leader

You may be like many accompanying partners, anticipating the experience with a mixture of excitement, anticipation and concern. It's an adventure. A chance to explore a new culture, live abroad, and grow as a family.

However, today's families have complexities that need to be addressed. Partners, female and male often leave behind jobs, support networks, aging parents, even a sense of independence. Once on the ground, you face the reality of being in an unfamiliar place, often without a built-in community or clear role. This transition can be especially disorienting for those who had fulfilling careers or strong social ties in their home country. Suddenly, you're not "the marketing director" or "the small business owner", you're "the partner."



It's important to reframe your role. You are co-leading the international experience. The move abroad impacts every member of the entire household, and your role in shaping the assignment and adapting to the new environment is pivotal to the outcome.

You are guiding your children through cultural transitions, advocating for your family in new systems, and finding solutions when everyday routines become complex. These actions build perseverance, creativity, and intercultural skills that last long after the assignment ends.

Many partners report that by the end of their assignment, they leave with new confidence, intercultural skills and leadership abilities, even if they weren't formally employed. This process of growth can feel uneven, filled with setbacks and unexpected challenges, but it often produces lasting resilience.

When you view yourself as co-leading, you also open the door to redefining identity.

When Marisa moved with her family to Singapore, she quickly realized she wasn't 'just a spouse.'

From enrolling her children in school to managing healthcare and navigating a new culture, she found herself leading much of the cultural adjustment. Her role, though not tied to a paycheck, was vital to her family's success. Later, she reflected that she gained confidence in decision-making and cross-cultural negotiation, all skills she hadn't recognized before and served her well when she returned to her home country.

Other partners describe leading in unexpected ways. One remembered taking charge when the family faced a medical emergency overseas. Another recalled organizing school transitions in three countries within five years. Each example shows that leading is not limited to the employee. It is the daily commitment of the partner as well.

When you view yourself as co-leading, you also open the door to redefining identity. Instead of asking 'What am I giving up?' you can begin asking 'What am I building?' This shift in perspective is important for sustaining motivation, managing uncertainty, and recognizing your value. It is not easy, but it is powerful.

What You Can Do:

- 1 Realize that you, the partner, are a strategic priority for the success of the assignment.
- 2 Partners need to be included in the initial briefing.
- 3 Consider language learning.
- 4 Plan on ongoing in-country support.
- 5 Begin cultural training (this should continue after you arrive at your new home, but it could be digital).
- 6 Find other assignee partners who have experience; they can act as mentors.
- 7 Since support correlates directly with assignment success, support should begin during pre-departure planning with a lot of information to set expectations.
- 8 The partner's mental health and well-being is an important priority; be sure to have access to people and services that will help you deal with the stress and help your adaptation: cultural awareness training and cultural mentors, telehealth support.



The Career Question and Male Partner Perspectives

Employment is often the most daunting issue for partners. The Permits Foundation (2022) found that **53% of partners were not employed in the host country, 84% of those wanted to work, and 26% considered leaving early** because of barriers. These statistics show how deeply career disruption can affect assignments. Career disruption is not only about income. It is about identity, self-worth, purpose, and long-term professional prospects.

Dual-career couples face this challenge most acutely. When one partner's career accelerates while the other stalls, questions of fairness, equality, and self-worth inevitably surface. Surveys confirm this tension. Even in single-career households, partners often feel the loss of independence and the lack of recognition for their professional value.

Javier, left his teaching career in Mexico when his wife's assignment took them to Canada. Facing certification barriers, he struggled to re-enter teaching. Eventually, he built a tutoring business that gave him flexibility and satisfaction. "I had to rewrite my career story," he said.

These experiences underscore how persistence and creativity can turn setbacks into new beginnings.

Often, partners feel pressure to explain employment gaps when re-entering the workforce. Reframing the time abroad as a period of skill-building and adaptation is helpful in these situations. Employers increasingly recognize intercultural competence, resilience, and problem-solving as valuable professional skills. Highlighting those experiences is strengthening your career story.

Aisha left her law practice in South Africa when her spouse accepted an assignment in the Netherlands. She worried about professional gaps, but by volunteering with a legal aid group and completing advanced training online, she transitioned into a new specialty when returning home.



Male Partners

Male accompanying partners face a distinct set of challenges. While most partners are still women, men **represent a growing minority**—estimated at around 16% of partners in earlier surveys (InterNations, 2015). Programs and networks, however, continue to be designed largely with

women in mind, leaving men with fewer entry points for connection. Research in the Asia-Pacific found that **85% of male partners** faced career challenges, but only **21% received support**. Many asked explicitly for male-specific groups or employment networks, needs echoed in newer studies (ResearchGate).

Male partners often report stress and social isolation. They describe being 'the only guy' in spouse gatherings or struggling to find activities that don't default to women-only spaces. This sense of exclusion compounds the emotional weight of leaving behind a career and adjusting to new roles. It also contributes to the underutilization of their skills and aspirations abroad.

James, an architect from Sydney, relocated with his wife on her assignment to Tokyo. At spouse gatherings, he was usually the only man. 'I felt both welcome and invisible,' he said. He initially felt diminished by his dependent visa status, but by mentoring younger entrepreneurs through an assignee hub, he rediscovered purpose. 'I found out I could still lead, just differently,' he said.

The Facts

- 53%** of partners were not employed in the host country
- 84%** of partners wanted to work
- 26%** of partners considered leaving early
- 85%** of male partners faced career challenges
- 21%** of male partners received support

Identity stigma also plays a role. Male partners describe awkwardness when asked in social settings, 'What do you do?' Some report reframing their role from 'trailing spouse' to 'shared assignment leader,' yet the stigma remains real.

Career re-entry is another hurdle. Networks, mentoring, and programs are often designed for women, leaving men with fewer avenues. Although studies show nearly 47% of partners return to work in the host country (Assignee Communication, 2022), men cite stereotypes and limited networks as bigger barriers.

Other men describe finding meaning in caregiving, managing households, or taking on community leadership roles. These experiences are challenging gender stereotypes and reshaping family dynamics in positive ways. By embracing flexibility and seeking new outlets, male partners are writing new narratives for themselves and their families.

What You Can Do:

- 1** Review the options. Many companies offer partner job support, career counseling and educational tools.
- 2** View career disruption as a challenge that can be solved. Talk openly as a couple about shifting roles and expectations.
- 3** Address career disruption issues, early.
- 4** For male accompanying partners, recognize that there is likely a smaller in-country community than there is for women. Consider the activities you'll want to be involved in and research ways to replace substantive elements, pre-assignment.
- 5** Examine volunteer opportunities and NGO introductions for partners, if desired.
- 6** Begin anticipating what you might want to do. Will you want to work? Volunteer? Be a stay-at-home partner? Address logistical issues and have a transition plan.



Family Dynamics

An international move reshapes the rhythm of family life. Couples are renegotiating roles, children are adjusting to new schools, and partners are juggling the hidden 'mental load.' Research consistently shows that family well-being is one of the strongest predictors of assignment success (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008).

Dual-career couples experience this tension sharply. One of the first changes couples experience is a shift in household roles. The employee often steps into a demanding new job, while the partner takes on responsibilities for housing, healthcare, schooling, and daily logistics in an unfamiliar setting. Partners themselves describe this as a “mental load”—a constant juggling act that, without recognition, can lead to stress and resentment. (Cole, 2011). Of course, there’s also the practical side of changing from two incomes to one.

Partners also juggle extended family obligations back home: elderly parents, relatives with health needs, or siblings who once relied on them. These ties don’t vanish with relocation; instead, they add layers of stress and divided loyalty (Andreason, 2008).

Children are equally central to family adjustment. A 2023 survey showed that **87%** of assignee parents believe their **children thrive** abroad (Assignee Communication, 2023), citing cultural exposure and resilience. However, **21% reported difficulties with school transitions** (Femmexpat, 2023). These struggles—language barriers, curriculum changes, or social adaptation—can weigh heavily on the entire household. When children adapt well, families report greater satisfaction overall. When they struggle, stress levels rise across the board.



Isabelle, relocating to London with her husband and two children, noticed that her son quickly embraced his new school, but her daughter cried every night for weeks. 'I felt torn,' she said. 'My husband was busy at work, and I was left trying to balance both children's needs.' With school support and counseling, her daughter eventually thrived, but the experience highlighted how uneven adaptation can be.

One of the most delicate challenges families face when considering an international assignment is the reality of leaving behind aging parents or other close relatives who depend on them. The pull between professional opportunity and personal responsibility can be heart-wrenching, especially in cultures where caring for elders is deeply ingrained. Even when support networks are in place at home, the distance often weighs heavily, bringing feelings of worry, and helplessness.



Lucas, moving with his family to China, struggled with the stress of caring for his own mother from a distance while supporting his children's school transitions. He described the experience as 'living in two worlds at once.'

His story captures the layered nature of family obligations. It's important to remember that family issues also affect work in the office. Studies point out that there is lower productivity when employees face difficulties at home.

You can talk with your organization and find ways you can ease your burden by connecting with others who have struggled with these circumstances, asking for eldercare planning and counseling.

***Emotional well-being is not a side issue.
It's central to the sustainability
of international assignments.***

Children's Education and Family Satisfaction Abroad

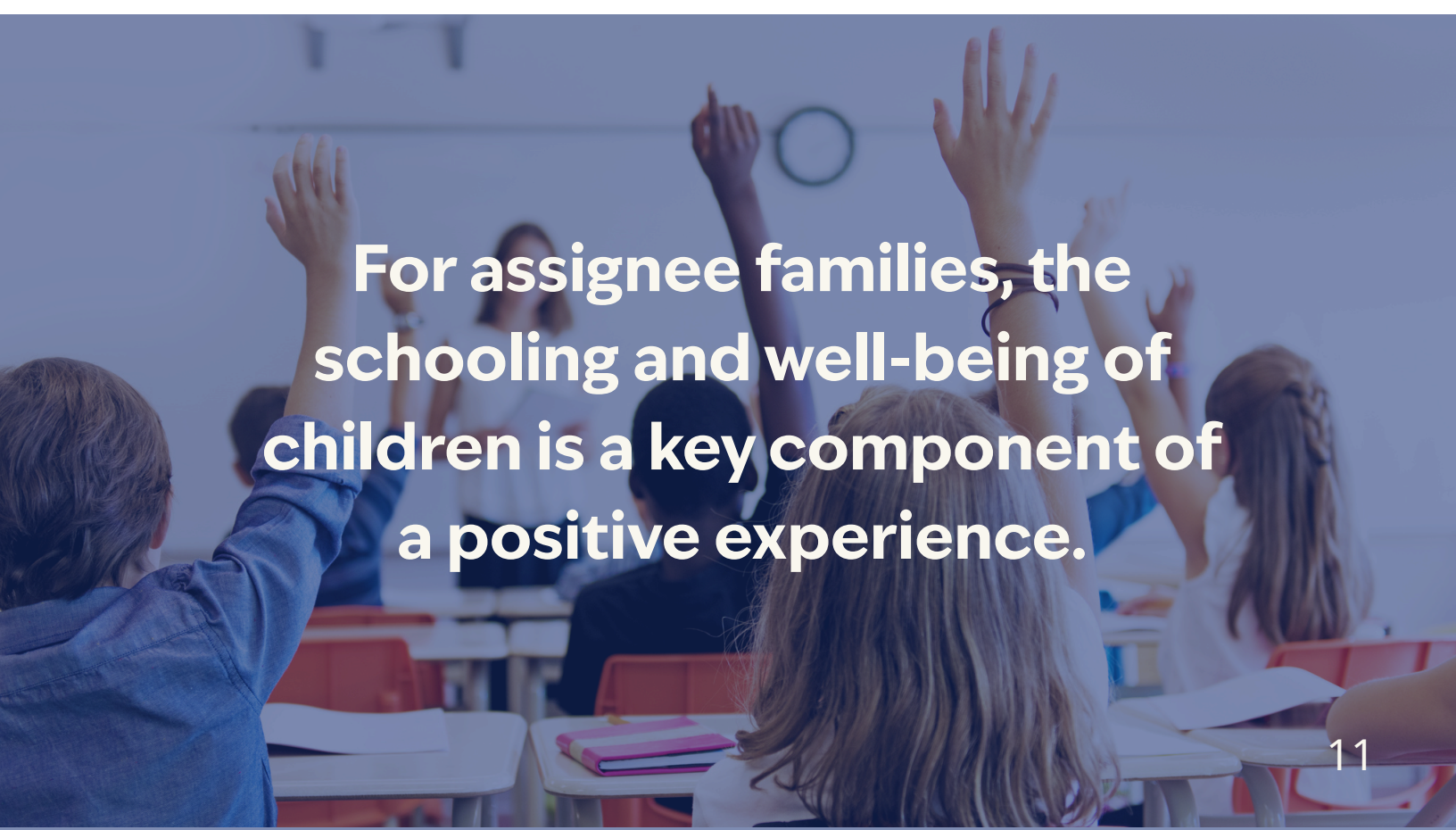
For assignee families, the schooling and well-being of children is a key component of a positive experience. Children are remarkably adaptable. They often learn languages faster and make friends quickly, but nevertheless this resilience doesn't mean they don't struggle. Kids need parents to validate their emotions, create continuity through routines, and celebrate both old and new traditions.

It's clear that children monitor and mirror how their parents handle the move. If parents are open, curious and upbeat, children are likely to thrive.

International and local schools play a big role in how children adjust socially and emotionally, as well as academically.

This is where children will meet their friends and create their own community. Almost as important is the ability for school-aged children to continue their sporting activities, or sports that are similar. This is a source of community for the family as well as the children. Finally, childcare and preschool concerns need to be addressed during the early discussions with HR.

Most assignee parents say the experience is positive for their kids. In a 2023 global barometer survey, **87%** believed their children were thriving abroad (assigneecomcommunication.com). Another long-term study found **98%** of parents felt their kids ultimately integrated well overseas, gaining cultural exposure and life experience (courrierinternational.com). With the right support, children often adapt—and flourish.

A photograph of a classroom with several children sitting at desks, raising their hands. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered over the image.

For assignee families, the schooling and well-being of children is a key component of a positive experience.

What You Can Do:

- 1** Involve kids early. Even young children like to feel they have a say. If possible, show them pictures of the new country, the house, or the school.
- 2** Uncover extracurricular activities for your children, and learn about the sporting events that may, or may not be different from at home.
- 3** Let them help pack their favorite toys or choose things for their new room.
- 4** Be sure to do research regarding schooling (application timelines, curriculum comparisons).
- 5** Teach kids about the new destination through stories, movies, music.
- 6** Examine workshops available for children/teens on cultural transitions.
- 7** Learn what is available for elder-care support, if you should need that. Plan for specific resources for older parents and family members left behind.
- 8** Determine whether you would benefit from a professional school service, whether or not your organization is paying for it.
- 9** Learn about daycares and preschools, if necessary.
- 10** Advocate for school and healthcare resources before arrival.
- 11** Be sure that your medical preparations are complete (vaccinations, insurance clarity, emergency plans).
- 12** Participate in family briefings about local healthcare, safety, transport, and daily living information.



The Challenge of Cultural Adjustment

Moving to a new country is often a deep, emotional transition that affects every part of daily life. For accompanying partners and their families, this adjustment can feel overwhelming, even if the move is exciting. Learning to navigate an unfamiliar culture while supporting a partner's job, helping children adjust, and rebuilding a personal identity from scratch is no small task.

That's why understanding the emotional and cultural journey of relocation is so important. This section introduces the widely recognized **assignee adjustment cycle**, breaks down what you can expect at each stage, and offers practical, family-friendly strategies to help you thrive.

Understanding the Assignee Adjustment Cycle

Research on global mobility (Solomon, 1995; Global Workforce, 1999) has identified a predictable emotional pattern experienced by most assignees and their families. This pattern is commonly referred to as the assignee adjustment cycle, which includes five key stages:

1. Preparation
2. Honeymoon
3. Culture Shock
4. Adjustment
5. Repatriation



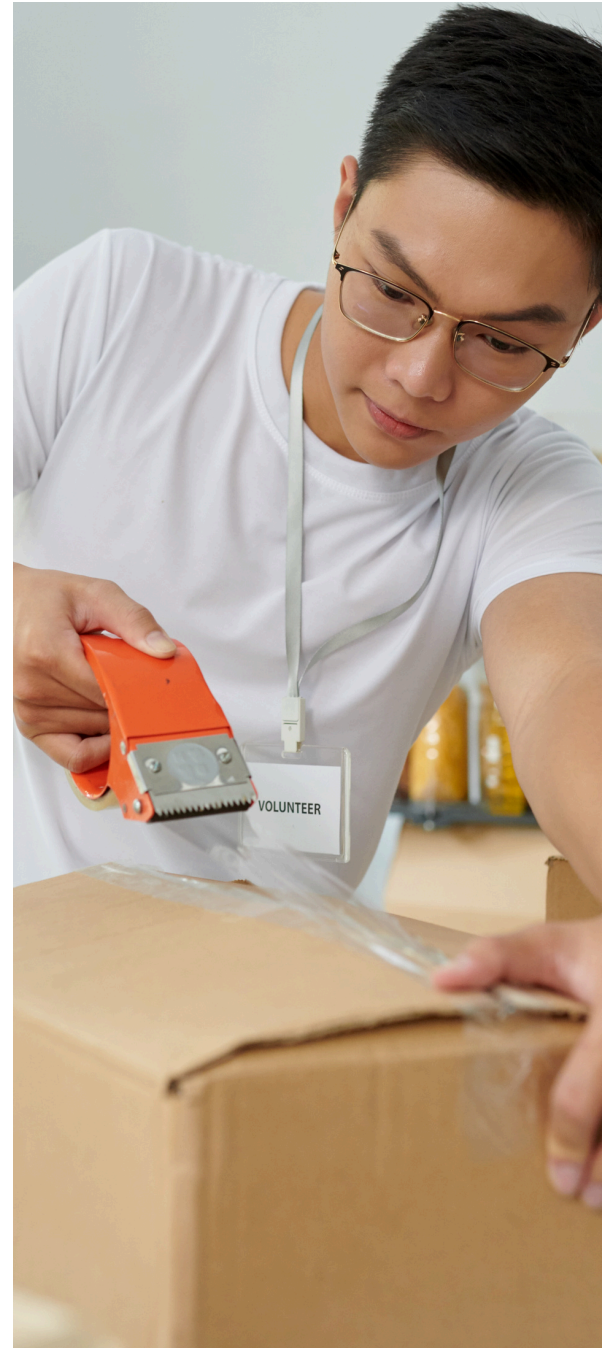
1. Preparation: Before The Move

This stage begins once a relocation decision has been made. Everything is hectic. You're packing, arranging schools, learning about housing, getting documents, saying goodbye. There's a To-Do list a foot long. Emotionally, this phase is a mix of anticipation and anxiety.

You might feel: Excitement about a new adventure, worry about what lies ahead, stress over timelines, preparations, and decisions.

Tips To Thrive

1. Attend any pre-departure briefings or cultural orientation sessions as a family, if you can (and if your children are old enough).
2. Start early conversations with children about the move; use maps, books, or videos to build curiosity.
3. Identify what matters most to each family member and make space for it in the transition plan.
4. Make a short list of things that make you feel calm or happy—books, music, mementos—and bring them with you. Don't pack them to ship, but keep them near so you or the kids will have them when you arrive at your new home.
5. Talk openly with your family about what you're nervous or excited about. It helps normalize those feelings for everyone, including kids.
6. Be sure to allow time for goodbyes and for plans to stay in touch. Regular Zoom calls or text groups help.
7. Ritualize goodbyes (farewell parties, memory books) and prepare kids for the emotional rollercoaster of change.



2. Honeymoon

Once you arrive, everything feels new, exciting, and even magical. You might be energized by different languages, charming streets, beautiful markets, or cultural customs. Families often lean into the novelty, exploring new places, trying foods, decorating your new home. Everything feels exciting. The air smells different. The sights and sounds are different. You may even feel like you're on vacation.

Even though you might experience mild disorientation, especially in logistics (e.g., shopping, transportation, banking) you'll probably feel optimistic and energized, with a sense of adventure.

Tips To Thrive

1. This is a crucial time to build positive habits.
2. You're starting to establish a life so that when Culture Shock sets in, you have some coping mechanisms.
3. Build routines.
4. Treat this phase as an intentional bonding time: make memories, explore your new location together, and keep things light.
5. Take photos, journal, or create a family blog to capture positive first impressions.
6. Use this stage to build routines: walk the neighborhood, visit schools, or locate parks, find a local café or market to return to.
7. Start to create your community. Meet people who have similar interests; join groups that may be of interest.



3. Culture Shock

This stage usually emerges after the initial novelty fades. Everyday life settles in, and challenges begin to stand out. Almost everyone experiences culture shock. It's the low point. Maybe communication is harder than you expected, or certain behaviors feel confusing or frustrating. You get frustrated because ordering coffee or lunch becomes something you need to think about.

Cultural expectations about developing relationships, attitudes towards time and the way you communicate. Family roles may have changed and you might feel quite different than you expected.

You might feel: Irritable, frustrated, or sad. It's not uncommon to feel lonely and out-of-place. You could be homesick.

The entire family will experience Culture Shock, and often in different ways. Children may express discomfort by withdrawing or acting out. The working partner may seem overly absorbed in work. The accompanying partner might feel isolated or underappreciated. Your kids are moody or withdrawn; your partner is absorbed in work and less emotionally available, you miss the ease of your old routines, friends, or job.

Tips To Overcome Culture Shock

1. Name it: Acknowledge that this is normal. Give each family member permission to feel what they feel.
2. Create anchors: Establish daily rituals—like family dinners, weekend walks, or shared reading time—to bring comfort.
3. Join local communities: Look for assignee groups, local classes, religious groups, or volunteer opportunities.
4. Practice curiosity: Instead of judging differences, ask questions. "Why might this make sense here?"
5. Take breaks: Plan a short getaway or even a weekend at home with familiar comforts. Rest matters.
6. Monitor your own stress signals. Seek help if needed: Many companies offer counseling services or access to assignee support coaches. Don't hesitate to use them.




4. Adjustment Phase

One day, you realize you've stopped thinking about how to order coffee. You remember street names. Gradually, routines begin to form. The streets feel more familiar. Your go-to grocery store becomes automatic. You recognize neighbors or favorite cafés. Most importantly, your family will begin to feel more confident and rooted in daily life.

You might feel: A new sense of competence, moments of ease and enjoyment, less emotional ups and downs.

Tips To Thrive

1. Celebrate small wins: successfully ordering food, making a friend, helping your child navigate school.
2. Share stories with friends or family back home.
3. Let each family member explore something independently—a hobby, a new skill, a language class.
4. Create rituals, even small ones like “pizza night” or “game night” or weekend hikes.
5. Try to think about this transition as a great adventure.

A photograph of a woman and a man sitting at a table in a cafe or office setting. They are both looking at their laptops. The woman is on the left, wearing a pink shirt, and the man is on the right, wearing a dark shirt. There are drinks on the table. A large white text overlay is centered over the image.

Supporting adjustment isn't just about managing stress. It's about creating meaning, connection, and confidence in a new environment.

Adjustment Phase continued

Supporting adjustment isn't just about managing stress. It's about creating meaning, connection, and confidence in a new environment. Each person adjusts differently and at different speeds. Here's what you can do to support each person:

For kids:

- Keep routines consistent.
- Find peer groups: school clubs, sports teams, language classes.
- Acknowledge their sadness over leaving friends or favorite places.
- Give them tools to talk about what they're feeling (emotion cards, journaling, drawing).
- Help them stay connected to old friends through letters or calls.

For the working partner:

- Encourage them to share what's going on at work. It helps the whole family understand what they're juggling.
- Remind them that you're also adjusting—and you need space to talk, too.

For you:

- Begin to build a network.
- Don't put pressure on yourself to love everything right away.
- Try something new just for you: a skill, a group, or even a solo coffee trip.
- Reach out. Even one good conversation can lift your whole day.
- Consider volunteering, if that's an option.
- Adjustment takes time, but it comes. Communicate with your partner about how you're going through the experience.

How To Support Your Family's Emotional and Practical Needs Abroad

Well-being is affected by stress, isolation, and access to support. The 2025 Frontiers study confirmed that stress has the greatest impact on adjustment, followed by isolation. Social support serves as a buffer underscoring the importance of community connections (Frontiers, 2025). Partners who seek networks, whether online or in person, report lower stress and higher resilience. Digital tools and virtual communities have emerged as lifelines, especially for those in remote postings or during global disruptions.

Ana, whose partner's assignment took them to São Paulo, joined an online peer group for assignee spouses before leaving home. By the time she arrived, she already had coffee dates lined up. "That group was my lifeline," she recalled. "When I felt lost, there was always someone who understood."



Her story reflects how proactive engagement in peer networks can buffer stress and accelerate adjustment. Other partners describe similar lifelines. Some are finding belonging in faith communities, others in language classes, sports clubs, or volunteer roles. Each connection lessens isolation and builds resilience.

Counseling and wellness programs also play a key role. Structured debriefings at the end of assignments help families reflect on their experiences and prepare for future moves. Self-care is critical. Making time for exercise, friendships, or creative outlets is keeping balance when other aspects of life are uncertain. Protecting wellness is leading by example for your family.

Emotional well-being is not a side issue. It's central to the sustainability of international assignments.

Building Purpose as an Assignee Partner

As we've said, moving abroad as an accompanying partner is both an adventure and a profound life transition. You leave behind familiar routines, professional identities, and social circles, and step into a world where nothing is automatic. While your partner's role abroad is defined by work, yours is often left open-ended, which can feel liberating, but also daunting.

Over the years, we've spoken with countless partners who describe those first months in a new country as a blur of logistics and adjustment. Once the initial excitement fades, the question arises: *What is my role here?* The answer often lies in building **purpose** and finding ways to create meaning, direction, and fulfillment in your new environment.

Here are some of the ways people have discovered



Exploring Career Alternatives

Many partners begin by exploring how their professional lives might continue abroad. For some, this means negotiating remote work arrangements with their former employers. For others, it opens the door to freelancing, consulting, or project-based work.

One partner we knew in Hong Kong had been a corporate lawyer in the US. She had teenage children and found it was difficult logistically to practice locally. She began advising startups remotely and later launched a small legal consultancy focused on assignees starting businesses. What began as a stopgap became a second career.

While local work permits as well as family responsibilities may restrict traditional employment, new models of work are available such as virtual consulting, online teaching, and other types of creative entrepreneurship help to maintain professional identity and keep your career momentum.

Volunteering

It may not always be possible because of cultural and societal norms, but for those who can, many find purpose in volunteerism. Volunteering in a new country allows you to connect with the community, put skills to use, and build social networks. The social element is very important.

Volunteering has a double impact: it offers meaningful structure and personal satisfaction, while communities benefit from partners' skills, time, and commitment.

Educational Opportunities

An international move is a natural invitation to **learn**. Whether it's language classes, local courses, or online certifications, it's a chance to seize the time to pursue professional or personal development.

Many people use this time to gain an advanced degree. This has the added possible benefit of meeting people with like interests. Remember that learning is not limited to classrooms. The very act of navigating daily life in a foreign culture and understanding local customs builds adaptability, empathy, and confidence. These are life skills with long-lasting value.



**Volunteering in a new country
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Creating a Social Network

Since isolation is one of the biggest risks for assignee partners, creating a network where you're connecting with people is very important. Building relationships cannot be overemphasized.

One assignee spouse (who later used her experience to become an HR specialist in global mobility) decided to try as many new things as possible the first six months of her assignment in Singapore. After a few months, she sorted out what she liked and didn't like. By that time she had a social network of neighbors, assignees, and people from the international community that made her destination country feel like home.

Building purpose abroad requires intention. It may come from career reinvention, volunteering, learning, social connection, or reframing your role—but it always begins with a willingness to explore. Assignee partners who embrace this process often discover not just a role in a new location, but a renewed sense of identity that enriches their entire global journey.



Tips for Building Purpose

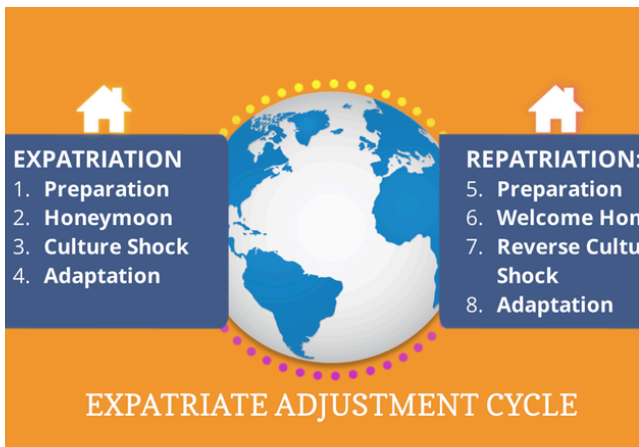
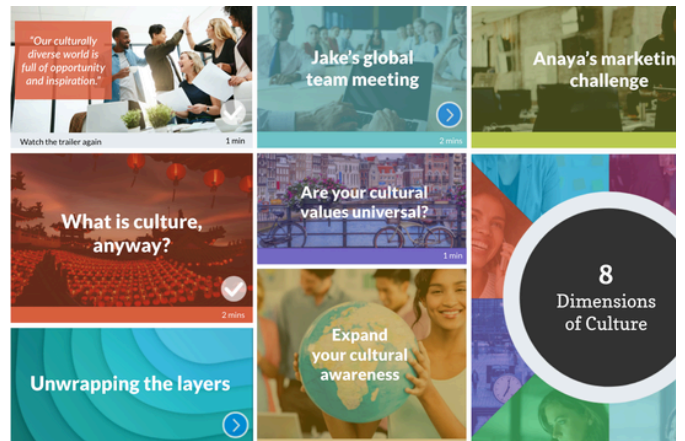
- **Experiment.** Treat this time as a discovery process. Try a language class, join a community group, volunteer, or try a new hobby.
- **Leverage Your Skills.** Think about what you enjoyed professionally or personally back home and look for new ways to apply those strengths.
- **Stay Open.** Some of the most meaningful opportunities come from unexpected places.
- **Give Yourself Time.** The first few months are about settling in, and some of that involves creating a community. Don't pressure yourself to have all the answers immediately, but try these tips as soon as you can.

Practical Resources: RW3 CultureWizard for Families and Partners

At RW3 CultureWizard, we've designed a suite of tools and learning experiences to help families thrive abroad and ensure assignments succeed. Some of the most relevant include:

Cultural Awareness Course™

This fast-paced course introduces the CultureWizard Intercultural Model. Learn all about what culture is, where it comes from, and how to recognize cultural behaviors.

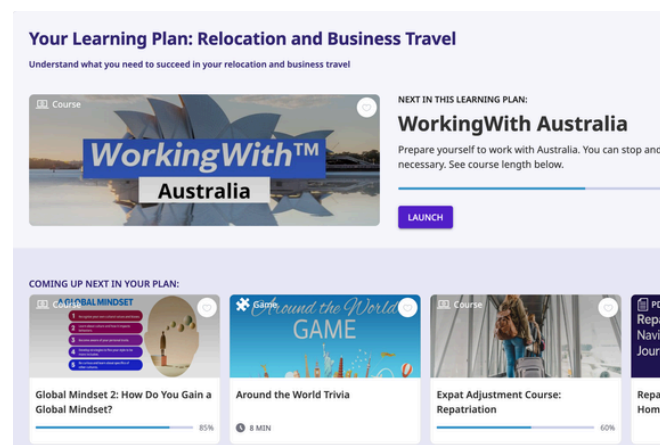


Assignee Adjustment Course™

A 10–15-minute course that prepares accompanying partners and families for the realities of life abroad. It offers practical advice on emotional readiness, cultural adaptation, and building new support networks.

International Assignment Learning Track™

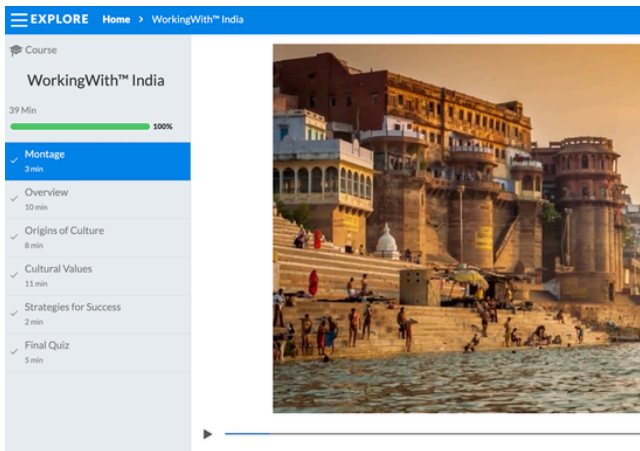
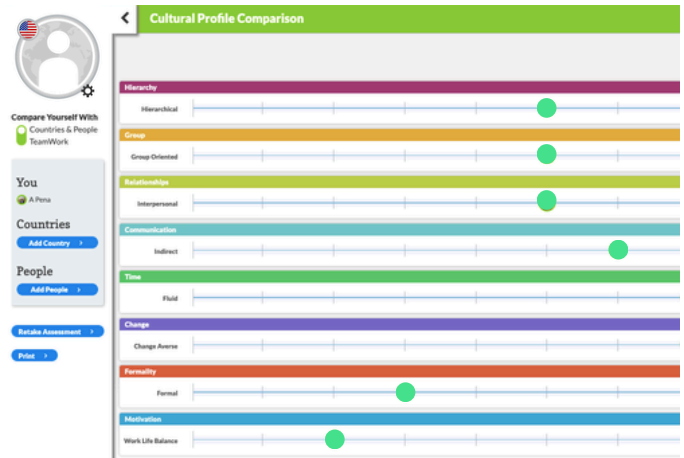
A structured series of microlearning modules covering every stage of the assignment journey: pre-departure preparation, on-assignment adaptation, and repatriation planning. Each module includes checklists and practical strategies for both employees and partners.



Practical Resources

Cultural Calculator Suite™

A set of interactive tools, including the Personal Cultural Profile, that help families understand their cultural preferences compared to their host country. These tools make cross-cultural adjustment concrete and actionable, whether it's navigating school systems, communication styles, or community integration.



WorkingWith Country Courses™

Destination-specific programs (e.g., Working with Saudi Arabia, Working with India) that provide cultural insights, business etiquette, and daily life tips. These can help partners feel more confident navigating schools, healthcare, and community interactions.

CultureWizard LIVE Webinars™

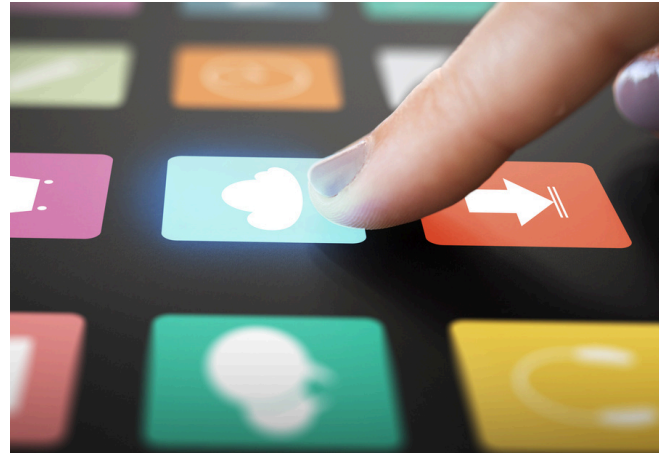
Interactive sessions on global mobility, cultural resilience, and inclusion — featuring expert speakers, real-life expat stories, and opportunities for families to learn together.



Practical Resources

On-Demand Cultural Awareness Games and Activities

Engaging tools like Spot the Bias or Celebrating Drinking Cultures make cultural learning accessible and fun for the whole family, reinforcing intercultural skills in approachable ways.



Resource Libraries and Checklists

Downloadable guides for relocation preparation, cultural dos and don'ts, family adjustment strategies, and repatriation planning — giving partners a tangible toolkit to manage transitions.

Ready to ensure every expat assignment succeeds?

CONTACT US TODAY!

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