

extremes - "You go, I'm staying here." to "How soon do we leave?" - represent the peaks and valleys through which you will go as you negotiate your way into the final acceptance of the inevitable. Only after you have accepted the reality of the posting can you begin to cope with the upheaval it will make in the life of your family.

Any change causes stress. Even though a posting confirmation may be expected, the reality causes a sudden increase in stress. Three factors that increase the stress of change are the magnitude of the change, the suddenness of the change and the unexpected direction of the change. You will probably be less capable the day after you are posted than the day before. These facts have implications for the management of assignments; the more culturally different the post, the more unexpected the assignment and the less time you have to prepare for it, the more stressful it will be.

Adaptability is the key to survival. In part this means the ability to find alternative support systems for you and your family. Instead of relatives close by, you will have colleagues, other Canadians at the mission and new neighbours; instead of old skills, you will acquire new ones; instead of traditional solutions to problems, you will discover new ones.

There is no set of criteria that accurately predict whether or not an individual will adapt successfully to an overseas posting. There seems to be no correlation between personality types or background and successful postings. Also, success one time does not guarantee success another time and vice versa, failure one time does not necessitate failure another time.

You must become adept at inserting yourself into, and extricating yourself from, communities. The knowledge that your time at any given post will be short creates a sense of urgency, and, in order not to miss any of the experiences offered by the posting, there is a tendency to dabble in everything and spread yourself too thinly.

- As a result will you forget how to make more than surface friendships?
- Will you become afraid to make emotional commitments, having experienced the pain of leaving so many times before?
- Will your children become perennial rolling stones who will never belong anywhere?
- Is there a danger of becoming professional chameleons who lack a firm sense of self-identity?

The need to belong is universal. If the family meets all the sociocultural and emotional needs of an individual, then moving away from that unit can be a long painful process when children mature, or if the family breaks up. The single person is faced with finding internal solutions and becoming adept at locating, selecting and using community and workplace resources to create a feeling of belonging.