

OUTBOUND

Anyone who lives overseas for a prolonged period of time is faced with the trauma of severing, at least temporarily, physical ties with relatives, friends and neighbours; foregoing known support systems for education, recreation, health care, cultural activities and spousal employment; overcoming the sense of loss which accompanies separation from everything that is familiar; and resolving any lingering doubts about the rightness of the move.

Two attributes are essential to prevent this upheaval from becoming an unending series of crises: patience and a sense of humour. Patience will enable you to cope with the foul-ups, the long lines, the endless flights, the chaos and turmoil, the hotel stay, the uncomprehending staff, new domestic help and your family's unrealistic expectations. A sense of humour will allow you to laugh at the foibles and failings of yourself and others, and turn the crises into part of your family's historical record of anecdotes.

One advantage of the outbound journey is that everyone is moving to an unknown destination; everyone is in the same boat. The family has the opportunity to learn about their environment together, to share this marvellously exciting adventure, to draw strength from each other and forge family bonds that will enrich the future. Homo sapiens are a socially gregarious species and longevity studies indicate that we thrive best in a nurturing, secure environment. The rotational aspect of foreign service life would seem to create a hostile insecure one. That this is not the case is a credit to us both as a species and as individuals.

i. Uprooting

Excitement and anxiety accompany preposting preparations in nearly equal parts. Your constant companion and primary reading material during the months of transition should be the **Foreign Service Employee's Handbook**, supplemented as necessary by referral to the **Foreign Service Directives (FSDs)** on those details that are specific to your family configuration and needs. The FSDs are your guide to all posting entitlements; acquire a copy and photocopy those sections of importance to you. When in doubt consult with the Posting Centre for a list of authority centres for the different sections such as relocation, schooling, family reunion travel, Foreign Service Leave.

The Handbook contains information with which you should be familiar. It also includes various lists to help you organize the move. As you browse through it during the early stages of the move, add your own lists of personal things to remember. Later on you will be too busy to think of things clearly, and these lists will help you to keep control of the situation.

In addition to the practicalities, procedures and protocol of a move, there is also the mental and emotional preparation. Reaction to a posting notification varies from person to person. The two