

**Staying Connected Through  
the Change  
(and I don't mean the internet!)**

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# The Tyranny of the To-Do List:

## How We Lose Connection

- Uncertainty makes us withdraw.
- Pressure to make 'right' decisions ups tension.
- Keeping secrets separates you.
- Lots to keep track of - Unfamiliar tasks take attention.
- Anxiety - decisions, money, disruption - reduces empathy.
- Constant decisions about what to take are tiring.

# The Tyranny of the To-Do List:

## How We Lose Connection

- To get it out of your head, you might make a to-do list.
- Lists are good for tasks that can be ticked off.
- Having an agenda can close your mind to connection.

# First Suggestions: Counteract the Corrosion

- Don't keep secrets -
  - Talk about the possibilities and uncertainty.
  - Help everyone relax.
- Expand the to-do list
  - Encompass 'want to dos' as well as 'have to dos'.
  - Reduces panic about missing out.
  - Everyone contributes to the list.
  - Take photos

# First Suggestions: Counteract the Corrosion

- Give don't sell -
- Giving stuff to people who need it feels better than trying to sell it.
- Decide jointly who will get the stuff you need to get rid of.
- *Except* if you do a tag sale that the kids run.
- Document the move, don't hide it.
- Take pictures of the packers, the boxes.

# The To-Do List Heads Home: Some Fallacies

- Fallacy 1 : ‘Once the kids are happy, I’ll be happy.’ Chief cheerleader.
- Fallacy 2: ‘Once the house is organised, I’ll be able to relax.’
- Fallacy 3: ‘Once we’re back home, everything will feel normal again.’
- Fallacy 4: ‘The kids need roots. This move will be good for them’

# Realities - and Advice

- The big stuff will probably be easier - you know the language, culture, layout.
- But the small stuff is still hard - you have been out of it and you don't fit the same way anymore. You must adopt new norms. It will take a year.
- These are not specific tasks — to go faster, slow down.



# More Realities for You

- You won't be able to tell your story adequately. (Show don't tell)
- Expat skills make you not fit in anymore. (Keep up your new interests)
- Superiority might creep in. (Don't try to impress anyone)
- You might feel critical of home. (Letting go of those associations. Make a social date. Listen with interest.)
- Boredom might appear. (Listen for depth. Buy a robot.)



# Family Realities

- Kids may be socially uncomfortable at school. (Not just playdates; rather, many generations hanging out. Less pressure on them)
- Kids fighting. (Too tired, hungry, lonely? Listen with interest.)
- Kids mad at you. (They might not love you for having brought them 'home'.)
- Partner distracted.

# CONNECT

To each other  
Knowing you can count  
on each other is the  
biggest gift of expat life.

Don't overlook this  
chance.

This is where the heart is.



# CONNECT

To your community

Find friends. Make the effort.

Encourage yourself to NOT know what's going on.



# CONNECT

To your location  
Find something you all  
like about where you are  
that you cannot  
experience anywhere  
else.

Do that together.



# CONNECT

To your past

Invest in keeping in touch.

