

Parent’s Companion to “The Amazing Adventures of _____: A Guided Journal to My International Move.”

This journal was developed to help elementary-age children prepare for the move experience and explore their feelings about the upcoming transition. The graphics and activities were created to make the journal fun to do, and the content incorporated the best evidence on fostering resilience, as well as years of lived experience from members of the foreign affairs community. Your child’s journal is a keepsake that chronicles a new beginning and allows them to write their own story. We encourage you to sit with your child, enjoy the process, engage in the fun, and learn together.

EMBRACE THE ADVENTURE WITH YOUR CHILD

The journal’s general theme accentuates that moving is an exciting adventure, rich with experiences and new connections. As an introduction, we encourage parents to embrace the following:

- This journal is meant to spark conversations between you and your child. The questions and activities will help your child consider their own identity, their friends and family, and what will happen as they prepare for transition. Children take their cues from you. Have an honest conversation about the upcoming move. It is OK to be “developmentally” truthful. Think about the information your child is ready to receive. Be transparent about what is going to happen in the next few days, weeks, and months.
- Each move creates another chapter in the family story. And most importantly, each move creates a new story for your child. Even within the same family, each child will develop different and exciting stories around a change in country, a change in friends, a change in school, and a change in themselves. And each child will respond differently to the various stages in the moving process. Be prepared for the full spectrum of emotions, reactions, and behaviors. Consider this overall message to your children during an international move: “We are going to be OK as a family” and “You are going to be OK as a member of our family.”
- Emotional ups and downs are a part of every change. Finding ways for your child to express themselves will help your child process the move experience. When changes are in the making, children can and do act out. Regression behaviors are common during transition periods, including bedwetting, aggression towards others, suppression, withdrawal or lack of communication. It is important that you exercise patience and understanding when your child exhibits these behaviors. If there are dramatic and/or alarming changes in your child’s personality, emotions, and behavior, please contact your primary health care provider or a qualified medical professional.
- Children thrive on routine and consistency. Moving to a new home, no matter how positive of a change it may be, is disruptive. Resilience research shows that keeping family traditions in place and some assemblance of routine during this chaotic time is incredibly helpful for children.
- As parents, it is tempting to shield your children from stressors and focus only on the positive. However, children look to their parents to know if the feelings they are experiencing are allowed and normal. Unexpressed feelings can lead to unwanted behavior,

such as anger, acting out or withdrawal. Whether your child is excited, quiet, frustrated, sad or upset, it is important to validate these feelings, offer reassurance, and facilitate a conversation that lets your child know they will be okay and they're not alone. Facing fears, instead of avoiding them, builds resilience. Make home a safe place to express their feelings and find support.

- During transitions, it is important to have “parent time” with your child. This is critical to the development of the parent-child relationship. Maintain open communication and ask open-ended questions. Feed your child’s curiosity and take time to be curious together. Learn about your next post’s language, food, unique cultural experiences, climate, and travel opportunities. As you discuss your new home, use this journal time with your child to explore what your new post has to offer.
- Several sections in the journal conclude with a reflection page where your child can express how they are feeling about saying goodbye, trying out a new language and new foods, getting settled in a new school, making new friends, and finding home in a new community. These pages are meant for your child to identify, through pictures, how they are feeling. Reflections also serve as an indicator for you, as the parent, to see your child’s picture choice of emotion so you understand all of your child’s feelings about this new adventure.

And so, let the adventure begin!

WELCOME TO YOUR JOURNAL

The purpose of this activity is to personalize the journal and socialize the concept of a pending move.

- The map provides a fun walk through identifying the present reality on the left-hand side and adventure and discovery on the right-hand side.
- Working through the journal, in the spirit of an adventure, will help to create a sense of accomplishment for your child.

CHAPTER 1: YOU ARE GOING ON AN ADVENTURE!

The purpose of this chapter is to identify a sense of self in your child, promote their curiosity and strengths, and set the stage for an exciting adventure to come.

- Explore “what makes me, me?” What am I good at? What do I want to learn? These types of questions, when asked by your child, give you a window into what is important for them. Ultimately, a child might be wondering, “Will I be the same “me” when we move to a new country?”
- Self-confident children are often willing to try new things. Help your child identify what they are good at and which skills and interests they can contribute when they join a new school? What unique talents do they bring with them? What stories can they share?
- As parents, be very attentive and curious about “new” questions, especially those that talk about “me.” The end of this chapter allows your child to choose a picture image to express how they are feeling about the move. Validating your child’s feelings fosters a sense of trust, so that your child can share again in the future without fear of dismissal.

Chapter 2: Family and Friends

The purpose of this chapter is to recognize family resilience and the importance of the family support system.

- Personal identity plays a large role in resilience and one's ability to cope with change. Identity for a child who moves around the globe every two to three years relates directly to his/her belonging in the world.
- In the family: How does your child fit in? What helps your child be an integral part of your family? How can your child contribute to the family unit? Having a sense of belonging to a family unit encourages family bonds. Even if your child has moved before, international moves create uncertainty. Emphasize that while certain things may feel different, your child's role in the family will not change. A feeling of belonging and support is a key element in nurturing personal, family, and community resilience.
- In the community: Where does your child fit in? Children are a natural bridge to the people in your community through friends at school, sports teams, religious groups, and extra-curricular activities. Assure your child that they will make new friends in your new home and keep the friends that are left behind.
- Family and friends construct a child's social network. Take time to talk about how to stay in touch with these important people in their life.

Chapter 3: Saying Goodbye

The purpose of this chapter is to find strategies for saying goodbye to family and friends. This is a longer chapter for a reason. It's hard to say goodbye.

- How to say goodbye is a great conversation to have!
- Saying goodbye, in itself, makes your child focus on "who" they consider as their good friends. In the foreign affairs community, we know of an assignment months before the actual move date, which translates into several months to anticipate the loss of a best friend. This can be stressful. Pay attention to how your child is feeling about not seeing his/her best friend every day.
- Talk with your child as they take time to consider which people in their life they will miss. Find ways to give closure to saying goodbye to friends, neighbors, teachers, babysitters, and extended family. Emphasize with your child that it does not necessarily mean these important people are gone forever. Many of these people have spent considerable time with your child and the loss of their presence will be felt.
- It is important for your child to understand that although you are moving, their immediate family will remain the same. Family goodbyes are a bit different because you most likely will see family again. However, for elderly grandparents, make sure your child has a way to keep in touch if it looks like they might not actually see them again.

- While your family is saying goodbye to friends and family, they are also saying goodbye to you! It is important to recognize this and find meaningful ways to keep friends informed of your travels and adventures. An international move is a new beginning for your family, and for the friends and family who want to stay in touch!
- Discuss how the family might stay connected to friends and find age-appropriate ways to do that like a family Facebook page or an annual holiday card/letter. And once you move, continue to talk to your child about ways to connect with family and friends. Having a communications plan can help to remove the sadness of not seeing someone every day.
- Saying goodbye involves more than just people. Leaving familiar surrounds -- your home, school, and neighborhood -- brings its own challenges. Take time to help your child capture the favorite places in their life. You might consider letting them take photos or encourage them to draw pictures. Doing this helps them honor these places and may help in their preparation to move on.
- Help your child express gratitude. One way is to have your child write thank you notes to the people who have played an important role in their life. Another way is to create a bedtime routine of sharing three things that you're both grateful for.

Chapter 4: Ready to Go

The purpose of this chapter is to forge understanding of the moving process. As a parent, have supportive, open conversations about the transition and reinforce a sense of curiosity for this new adventure. Being comfortable with not knowing everything yet models a growth mindset that fosters resilience. Discuss with your child how long it will be before the family sees their belongings again.

- In our foreign affairs world, moving is a process. It does not happen in one day or even one week. Moving involves preparation, packing and shipments, airplane travel, and arrival at a new post where it takes several more weeks until shipments arrive. Talk with your child about every aspect of the move, the projected timing given where you are assigned, and the different shipments that may be involved.
- Allow your child to select items for their suitcase. For the Unaccompanied Air Baggage (UAB), allow your child to include one small box of their favorite items (toys, books, favorite pillow, etc.). The rest comes as household effects (HHE). Use the guided journal to help your child understand the differences in shipping speeds and involve them in small choices about the shipments.
- You may also identify some items that your child can donate or give away to charity. Knowing that belongings are going to a good cause encourages the gift of giving, kindness, and social responsibility. Make this event collaborative within your family.
- Pack outs and the actual moving day are periods of extreme disruption. Explain the moving process to your child. As a parent, consider what happens to your child during moving day. Do they watch the packers, stay at a friend's or relative's house? If they are home, who keeps an eye on them? If you feel it important for your child to be part of the pack out day, explore letting them stay home from school (with the school's permission and understanding of the emotional importance of being home for the big move day!).

- As a parent, it is important to discuss with your child your expectations for their behavior during pack out and moving. While this might not necessarily avoid tears and/or a tantrum, it begins the discussion of how hectic the day will be, with many people in the house, and their belongings placed in boxes. Praise good behavior (if earned) and share that finishing a pack out is a huge accomplishment! Celebrate the move by a night out for pizza or going to your child's favorite restaurant.

Chapter 5: New Country

The purpose of this chapter is to address the concept of home in a new country and to promote curiosity and discovery while learning about what life will be like once you land on the ground.

- When a family learns they are moving, a phase of exploration begins. Some might refer to this as the “rehearsal” or “research” phase. Children are naturally inquisitive. As you research your new country of assignment, share what you discover with your child. Help them understand the “big issues” like a change in climate, crowded streets, new sights and sounds, and other immediately identifiable differences. And encourage your child, if age appropriate, to do some research on their own!
- Your child's curiosity will offer up many new questions. What will my school be like? Will there be a soccer team? What about music lessons? What language will I learn? Do I have to eat the food? Will I make friends?
- It's amazing what children pick up as they move around the world that later impacts who they become as adults. The research on Third Culture Kids (TCKs) and Global Nomads – children who grow up with the influences of foreign lands – illustrates the importance of cultural understanding. Learn about the culture. Take notice of how your child operates in their present culture. Who will they be in the next culture?
- Feed curiosity. Explore with your child those things they will learn in the new country. Take time to be curious together and learn about the city you are moving to, the language, fun excursions, climate, traditional clothing, and opportunities to travel in the region. Share some history about the country. Figure out what routines or activities will help your child feel grounded as they adjust to change.
- Introduce your child to new foods that represent commonly available cuisine. Cook recipes at home that mirror some new tastes they might encounter. Seek out local restaurants that feature the food of your assigned post. Often these restaurants have photos or artwork on the walls and staff who hail from the country.

Chapter 6: New Home

The purpose of this chapter is to help children envision a new living space, to think about what is important for them to include in that space, and how they feel about a new environment.

- The concept of home is important for children. Home is usually one's family residence. Family and home are defined in various ways within our foreign affairs community. Home could be back in the states at grandma's house or in a home that is currently rented out to

another family. For most young children, however, home is where they sleep and where their toys and belongings are – with you.

- Talking about moving to a new home, in a new place, with new surroundings will help ease transitions. Talk about how and when you will set up the new home, what your child can bring with them, and who is coming to the new home – all important factors in a child’s understanding of “where’s home.”
- A child will easily identify differences in living quarters. Planning for those differences will avoid surprises and encourage curiosity in your child, an important tenet of resilience. Will you be in an apartment building with an elevator? Will you be in a house with a backyard? When you receive your housing assignment, think about your child’s space in the larger context of home. What are the identifiable differences? Share housing photos!
- During relocations, your child might feel a lack of control. For instance, a child has “little say” in the timing of a move. Coping with this lack of control, and the associated lack of routine, can be difficult. What areas can your child have control over? Their bedroom is one area they can call uniquely their own, even if shared with a sibling. Personalizing a child’s bedroom is a great activity to do together, both in the planning stages and the move-in stage.
- Some parents choose to set up their child’s room immediately upon arrival at post. Familiarity, with some same items from back home, can be comforting.
- Discuss possible hotel stays or temporary quarters with your child. Are you traveling a bit as a family before arriving at post? Letting children know that some phases of the move are temporary helps with the questioning of “when do I move into my room?”

Chapter 7: New School, New Friends

The purpose of this chapter is to help your child recognize that school, friends, and activities at a new post will be new and different.

- Children are a wonderful bridge to the people your family meets at a new post. School communities are often an important part of a Mission community. Recognize that kids will more readily explore this new community without fear and be eager to introduce you, as parents, to their new-found friends. Embracing these new friendships gives work/life balance to your family setting. Getting together with other families teaches children how to interact with people of all ages and to create new bonds where extended family is absent.
- For some children, making friends is a challenge for a variety of reasons. This journal encourages children to think about how they might start a conversation to learn what their peers are thinking. Parents may want to ask their child about the traits they value in a friend.
- Remember that some children spend their first one to two months at post “watching” and “decoding” the scene at school and with friends. This watching period is not passive, but rather active learning. Don’t be alarmed if it takes time for your child to feel comfortable in their new environs. You may want to revisit the journal during this time to reconnect your child with some ideas for making new friends.

- If the Community Liaison Office at your new post has assigned a sponsor family, have your child involved in the communication. Does the sponsor family have a child of a similar age or know an embassy/consulate child of the same age? Consider creating some form of communication channel that allows your child to explore and ask questions of their own.
- Once at post, encourage activities that bring kids together. Socializing through clubs and team sports are powerful ways to promote collaboration with each other, support for one another, and shared experiences which deepen friendships.
- Encourage curiosity while balancing it with a sense of safety, health and security. A frank conversation about what's possible for new activities at a new post will help manage expectations. There may be strict security protocols at the school. Children may be required to only ride in approved transport to and from school. Children might not be able to wait outside the school for a parent to pick them up, but rather in a secure area. Share as much as you can with your child, before arrival at post, about the school routine. Whether your child will be required to wear a uniform is also good information to share.
- Safety first! In American culture, kids wear bike helmets. Overseas, your children will see people not wearing helmets. They will see motorists now stopping for red lights. Be aware that these changes are noticeable to children so emphasize safety early on.

Chapter 8: Learning and Discovery

The purpose of this chapter is reflection. It's the last chapter with the message that your child's move adventure will end with having learned and discovered more about themselves. This is a growth experience for all concerned.

- Moving is an adventure in self-discovery. This experience will help shape your child's identity, their relationship to their friends and family, and their view of their place in the world. Work with your child through this guided journal and through their process—before and after the move—as they consider and encounter new experiences, people, and challenges.
- Help your child develop resilience and an outlook that allows them to benefit from the challenges and unique experiences that come from living abroad and moving internationally.
- As your child explores, be prepared for the difficult “why” questions. Why are children in this country poor? Why do people look different from us? Why can't we come home to see grandma on Sundays?
- Encourage children to talk, to draw, and/or play board games. These activities can help a child express and understand their feelings.
- Transitions can have a profoundly positive affect on children. It is an opportunity to refresh! Some ways that parents might engage children in a change: refresh the wardrobe (get ready for a new school), donate old toys and clothes, and decorate your child's new bedroom.
- Transitions affect developmental, intellectual, physical, and emotional changes – all happening in a two to three-year tour. As a parent, you will notice significant changes when transitioning between schools, between posts, and even over summer breaks.

Once you have arrived at post, in your new country, in your new home:

- Revisit how the move went and talk about your travels to post. This activity is reassurance for children – what went as planned and how you overcame the challenges!
- Parents should remember to remain calm and not be impatient or uninterested in “repeated” questions from your child. This is a time to listen, reflect, and reassure. Information is the antidote for anxiety.
- Ask your child “what was your favorite part of the move?” What was your biggest concern? What do you think now? These conversations can shed light on a potential negative that became a positive.
- Be appreciative of your children. Focus on their competencies and progress, efforts and strategies, not their deficiencies or setbacks during these times of transition.
- Helpful phrases like “You did really well on the plane” and “I’m really proud of you” provide positive feedback to a child. Reward and reinforce good behavior. Praise effort and support your child when they take risks and make mistakes.
- Find the good in each event along the way. Focus on that which you can control. Remember your children are watching you. You set the example for dealing with challenges and difficult circumstances, like cancelled flights, travel challenges, lost items, etc. Help them develop a resilient outlook that allows them to benefit from the challenges and unique experiences that come from living abroad and moving internationally.

RESOURCES

- **The Transition Center, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State**
The Transition Center provides security awareness and life skills training, post-specific bidding and assignments materials, resilience training, and retirement planning courses for U.S. Government foreign affairs employees and family members assigned to diplomatic posts abroad. Their mission is to prepare the Department of State and inter-agency community for competence and success in U.S. foreign affairs through transition training, resources, and information, with the vision of a resilient foreign affairs community that successfully manages repeated career transitions and stands ready to execute U.S. foreign policy goals across a full career span. Values: We are people focused | We are innovators | We empower | We care.
[Visit on the web](#) | 703-302-7171
 - **Overseas Briefing Center: Post Info To Go**
Foreign affairs employees and adult family members, assigned to a U.S. Mission overseas, can access the Overseas Briefing Center’s Post Info To Go collection of post-specific resources via the Department of State intranet and a passworded internet website known as Post Info To Go – External. Research materials include post videos, KidVids, schooling and childcare options, housing photos, Community Liaison Office welcome materials, pet shipping guidance, family member employment information, and more. [Contact the OBC](#) for your post research.

- **Overseas Briefing Center: Kid Videos (KidVids)**
The [Overseas Briefing Center](#) hosts its annual KidVid Contest, with foreign affairs youth submitting videos of their experience. Watching these videos together as a family is a perfect way to socialize the idea of moving overseas. Videos highlight (with real footage) fun activities, the social scene including schooling, and the sights and sounds of the new country.
- **Overseas Briefing Center: Kid CultureGrams**
Access Kids CultureGrams, an Overseas Briefing Center offering that allows your child to explore the culture of a country on your home computer or tablet. [Contact the OBC](#) for logons. Learn the geography of a country, find recipes, view pictures, read about what kids do for fun, and more!
- **Training Division: Courses and Webinars**
 - Young Diplomats Overseas Preparation (MQ250)
 - Going Overseas in the Foreign Affairs Community with Children (MQ210)
 - Moving Overseas Logistics for Foreign Affairs Youth (MQ230)
 - Educating Your Special Needs Child in the Foreign Affairs Community [Webinar](#)
 - [Check for new webinars](#)
- **Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (CEFAR)**
 - Encouraging Resilience in Your Foreign Affairs Child (MQ500)
 - [Check for new webinars](#)
- **Global Community Liaison Office, Bureau of Global Talent Management, Department of State**
Global Community Liaison Office (GCLLO) serves U.S. government direct-hire employees and their family members, from all agencies under Chief of Mission authority serving overseas and returning to the United States. GCLLO's mission is to improve the quality of life of all demographics we serve by identifying issues and advocating for programs and solutions, providing a variety of client services, and extending services to overseas communities through the management of the worldwide Community Liaison Office (CLO) program. [Visit on the web](#) | 202-647-1076
 - [Education and Youth](#) | GCLLOAskEducation@state.gov
 - [Transitioning from School to School](#)
 - [Community Liaison Office Program](#)
- **Office of Overseas Schools, Bureau of Administration, Department of State**
The mission of the Office of Overseas Schools is to promote quality educational opportunities at the elementary and secondary level for dependents of American citizens carrying out our programs and interests of the U.S. Government abroad. [Visit on the web](#) | 202-261-8200
 - [Regional Education Officers](#)
 - [Resources from the Office of Overseas Schools](#)
- **Associates of the Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)**
The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide is a non-profit organization that has been representing Foreign Service spouses, employees and retirees since 1960. AAFSW

is an independent advocate for its membership, giving members a stronger voice when working on common concerns and a chance to enjoy shared interests. They publish a variety of books including the those below. You can find more information at <http://www.aafsw.org>.

- *Raising Kids in the Foreign Service*, edited by Leah Moorefield Evans. Experienced expat writers share stories and experiences.
- *Realities of Foreign Service Life*, a two-volume set of reflections and perspectives on the realities of Foreign Service life as experienced by members of the Foreign Service community around the world.
- *The Foreign Service Companion: Moving Your Household Without Losing Your Mind*, a collection of advice, stories and entertaining anecdotes to serve as your “companion” while you survive an international move! The first volume in a planned series.
- **Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF)**

Established in 1989, the Foreign Service Youth Foundation is the only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to the support of children of employees of the U.S. foreign affairs agencies. Growing up in the Foreign Service can be challenging for our youth. Through publications, contests, workshops and regular family events, they help young people adapt to their changing environments during transitions between posts worldwide. They help children embrace the adventure by encouraging resilience, fostering camaraderie, and celebrating achievements.

 - [Books for Younger Children](#)
- **Families in Global Transition (FIGT)**

Families in Global Transition is a welcoming forum for globally mobile individuals, families, and those working with them. They promote cross-sector connections for sharing research and developing best practices that support the growth, success and well-being of people crossing cultures around the world.

 - [Resources for Global Transitions](#)
 - [TCK/CCK Resources](#)
 - [Online Bookstore](#)
- **Military Resources**
 - Military One Source: [Moving Overseas with Children](#) (article)
 - Military One Source: [Making the Move Easier for Your children](#) (Podcast)
- **Books for Parents**
 - *Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child: Practical Storytelling Techniques That Will Strengthen the Global Family*, by Julia Simens.
 - *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds (3rd Edition)*, by Ruth van Reken, Michael Pollock, and David C. Pollock.
 - [The Global Nomad Experience: Living in Liminality](#), by Barbara F. Schaetti and Sheila J. Ramsey
- **Videos**

- [How Resilient Are Children Who Are Relocated Abroad?](#), YouTube video by Robin Pascoe
- [Raising Children Overseas with Dr. Elmore Rigamer](#), YouTube video presented by the Transition Center, Foreign Service Institute
- **Articles**
 - Children’s Mental Health Network: [The Trouble with Third Culture Kids](#), by Nina Sichel
 - The Child Mind Institute: [Advice for Moving with Children: How to make a stressful time easier](#), by Ryan and Rachel Ehmke
 - [Identity and the Need to Belong: Understanding Identity Formation and Place in the Lives of Global Nomads](#), by Béate Mariam Killguss, MA Ed.

SUGGESTED CHILDREN’S BOOKS ON RESILIENCY & MOVING

- **Ages 3-6**
 - *B at Home: Emma Moves Again*, by Valerie Besanceney
 - *A House for Hermit Crab*, by Eric Carle
 - *The Tiny Seed*, by Eric Carle
 - *Neville*, By Norton Juster
 - *Pete the Cat: I love my white shoes*, by Eric Litwin
 - *Pete the Cat: Rocking in my school shoes*, by Eric Litwin
 - *Big Ernie’s New Home: A Story for Children Who Are Moving*, by Teresa Martin
 - *Boomer’s Big Day*, by Constance McGeorge
 - *Moving House*, by Mark Siegel
 - *Bad Bye, Good Bye*, by Deborah Underwood
 - *Alexander, Who’s Not (Do You Hear Me? I Mean It!) Going to Move*, by Judith Viorst
 - *My Very Exciting, Sorta Scary, Big Move: A workbook for children moving to a new home*, by Lori Attanasio Woodring
- **Ages 6-10**
 - *El Deafo*, by Cece Bell
 - *Amber Brown is Not a Crayon*, by Paula Danzinger
 - *Henry and Mudge and Annie’s Good Move*, by Cynthia Rylant
 - *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*, by Dan Santat
 - *The Curious Garden*, by Peter Brown
- **Pre-teen to Teen**
 - *My Life in Dioramas*, by Tara Altebrando
 - *Book Scavenger* (series), by Jennifer Bertman
 - *Marcus Vega Doesn’t Speak Spanish*, by Pablo Cartaya
 - *Allie Finkle’s Rules for Girls: Moving Day*, by Meg Cabot
 - *First Rule of Punk*, by Celia Perez
 - *Amal Unbound*, by Aisha Saeed
 - *Club Expat: A Teenager’s Guide to Moving Overseas*, by Aniket Shah
 - *Harbor Me*, by Jacqueline Woodson
- **Adults to Kids**

- *Misunderstood: The Impact of Growing Up Overseas in the 21st Century*, by Tanya Crossman
- *Expatriate Teens Talk: Peers, Parents and Professionals offer support, advice and solutions in response to Expatriate Life Challenges as shared by Expatriate Teens*, by Lisa Pittman and Diana Smit
- *Slurping Soup and Other Confusions: True stories and activities to help third culture kids during transition*, by Tonges, Meneze, and Gemmer Emigh