

Living Abroad

THIS GLOBAL NOMAD LIFE

GRIEF IN
TRANSITIONS:
LEAVING & STAYING

with KATE BERGER
from *Expat Kids Club*



Living Abroad

Workshop Series

OCTOBER 14



***Culture Shock
& Well Being***

*Thriving in
Transition*

NOVEMBER 25



***Third Culture
Kids (TCKs)***

*Supporting
our Children*

FEBRUARY 17



***Accompanying
Partners***

*Supporting
Ourselves*

MAY 12



***Leavers &
Stayers***

*Understanding
Grief & Loss*

with Kate Berger,
EKC (Expat Kids Club)



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Workshop Series

1. Awareness about Culture Shock

- Pyramid of Maslow: survival mode
- Cycle of comparison now vs before:
PERCEPTION → EVALUATION → COMPARISON → ACCEPTANCE → PERCEPTION

2. Understanding our Third Culture Kids

- Part of their developmental years in a culture other than their parents' passport

3. Empowering Accompanying Partners

- Importance in success of assignment & discovery of self-identity in new role

4. Life in Transition: Stayers and Leavers

- Preparing for transition and processing grief in transitions



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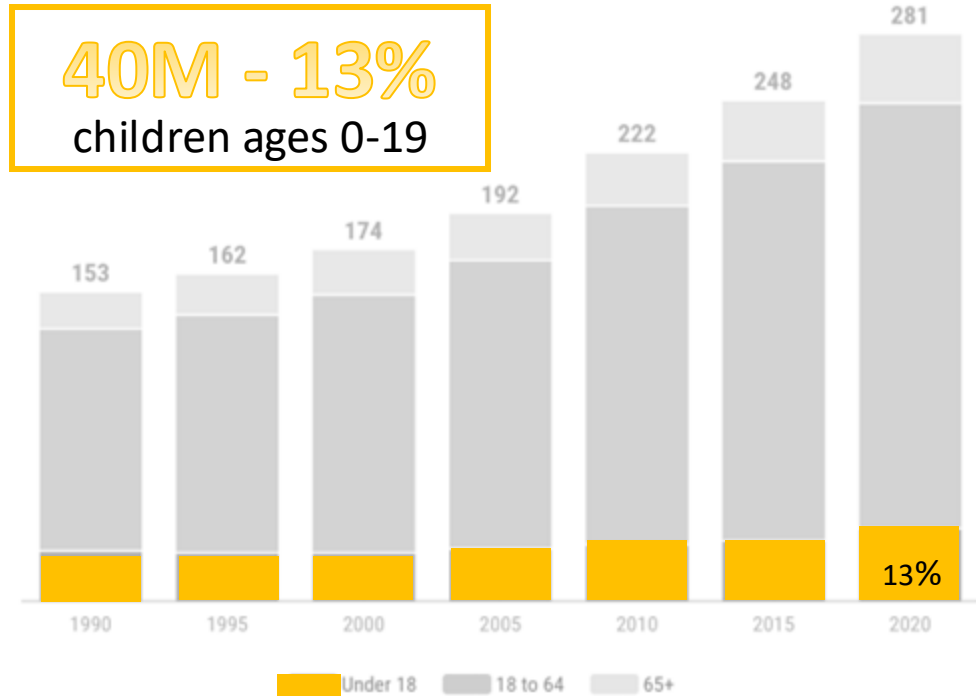
Leaving & Staying



EXPAT
70M

7M - 12%
children ages 0-19

40M - 13%
children ages 0-19



2020 International MIGRATION
2020 UN Report

Migrant

Remains permanently abroad

Expatriate

Returns or Remains globally nomad



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Leaving & Staying



LOSS
GRIEF

**TRANSITION
ASPECT**

LOSS
GRIEF

NEW SETTING
(new rules)

**CULTURAL
ASPECT**

SAME SETTING
(but different)

life transition

Any **change** that impacts your life in a significant way

"Safe Passage Across Networks"
by Doug Ota

"The Nest"
by Catriona Turner



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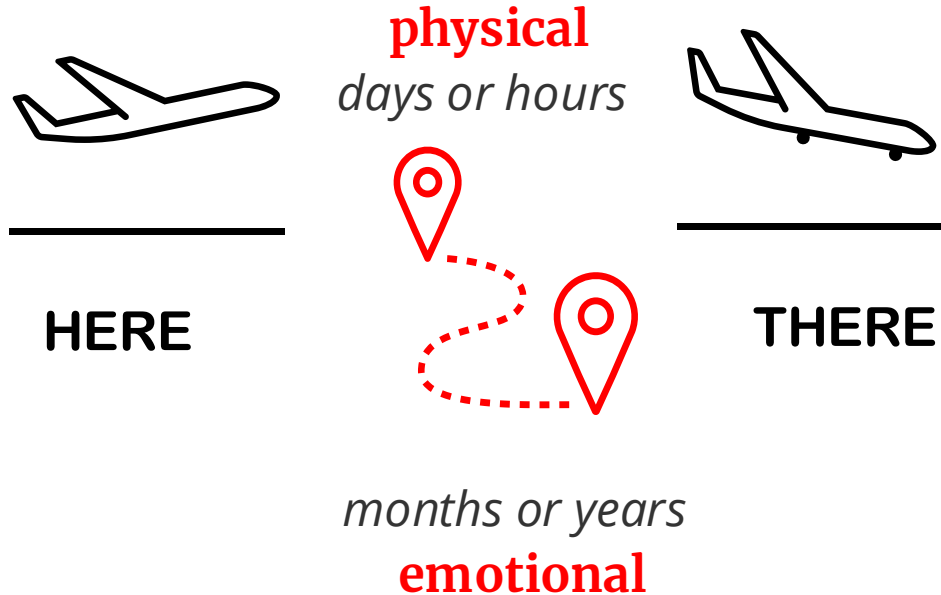
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Transition & Grief



"and wherever I
am,
there you are,
behind my back"

*The Soul Travels on Horseback
by Mimi Khalvati*



"The soul
follows the
body, but
slowly, on
the back of a
horse from
one place to
another, amid
change".

change (physical)

an **external process** of "moving"
from one state, stage, subject or place
to another

transition (emotional)

an **internal passage** or process
of adapting to that change



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Transition & Grief



LOSS ♥ GRIEF ♥ MOURN

Fact

Response
(Internal)

Expression
(External)

loss

the **fact** of no longer having (things, places, events or relationships) we care for, and cannot get back as they were

grief

the **reaction** or **response** to a loss (things, places, events, relationships) as an affirmation of the **good**



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LOSS ♥ TRAUMA

Fact

Wound

*"the Greek word
for **Trauma** is
Wound"*

as per Dr Gabor Maté

loss
what happened to you

trauma
the **wound** sustained as a result



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Transition & Grief



Lack of awareness Loss of our World, Dream, Status, Lifestyle, Possessions, Relationships, Role Models, System Identity, Cultural Balance, a Past That Wasn't, a Past that Was

Lack of permission to grief discounting, comparing, denying

Lack of time being in our new place in a plane, car ride

Lack of comfort idea of comfort vs encouragement

Lack of understanding labeling our emotions

Hidden Loss

loss that is normalized, non-validated, non-considered, unaware.



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Transition & Grief

**GRIEF
FATIGUE**



Little T's

- grief inducing experiences, like losses
- that tend to be normalized or non-validated

What happens?

- become significant when suppressed
- they stack and accumulate if not processed
- leads to anger, denial, sadness, withdrawal

"unresolved grief is a major challenge for mobile families"

Third Culture Kids

The Grief Tower
by Lauren Wells

Grief Tower

expats experience more grief than the domestic counterparts

expat life transitions
frequency and degree
of change and transitions

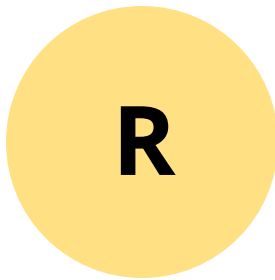


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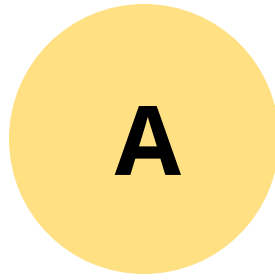


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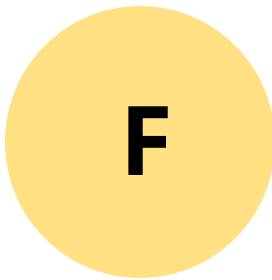
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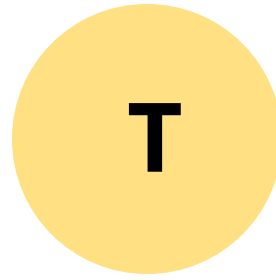
RECONCILIATION



AFFIRMATION



FAREWELLS



THINK
DESTINATION

*"Leaving right is the
key
to **entering** right"*
Pollock @ TCK

Third Culture Kids

by David Pollock and Ruth Van Reuten

How do we face the approaching loss
while still looking ahead with hope?

mourning

a **conscious decision** to go from the
loss to a new stage through
a series of rituals

rites of passage

a **ceremony or event** marking an
important stage or change
in someone's life



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Transition & Grief

Managed

"Saying goodbye to people is difficult, but my life has been enriched for knowing these people"
"Saying goodbye is hard, but at least I know how"
"Life's challenges are really disguised opportunities for growth"
"I can make new friends, and I know how to do that"
"Although it might be hard to say goodbye to them, it is knowing people deeply and being known deeply that makes life worthwhile"
"I will never lose the important connections I have felt to important people"

Un-managed

"People you begin to care about will leave"
"It's better not to let people too close"
"The only person you can really depend upon is yourself"
"Other people will ultimately disappoint you"
"Life's challenges are things you have to make it through on your own"
"If you don't care too much about people, it's not so hard to say goodbye"
"If you're leaving anyway, what's the point in making friends?"

"Say a
clear
goodbye
to have a
clear hello"

Safe passage

Doug Ota

LAW I of Transitions

narratives

stories help to integrate information about events and experiences, and their interconnections

Attachment theory

explores how early relationships shape the way we connect with others throughout our lives



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Transition & Grief

"What do we do when our hearts hurt?" asked the boy



"We wrap them with friendship,
Shared tears and time, till they
wake hopeful and happy again."

"The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse"
by Charlie Mackesy



If you'd like to get in contact with Veronica Barbon
at *Belonging Abroad*

<https://belongingabroad.com>



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Leaving & Staying

The Expat Kids Club

- *Who are we?*
- *How we work?*
- *Whom do we support?*

If you'd like to get in contact with Kate Berger at EKC

<https://www.expatkidsclub.com/kate>

<https://www.expatkidsclub.com>



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The Expat Kids Club Services

- **Individual** support for kids, teens and parents,
- In-person and virtual support in the Netherlands and within the **global community**
- Advocacy for TCK
 - Finding the **right** mental services for your child
- Corporate consultancy
- Educational consultancy and **school collaboration**
- Outreach/Social media



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What makes transitions so hard?

In the midst of **instability**,
meaningful relationships
can become **detached** and
superficial..



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Leaving & Staying

What makes transitions so hard?



...constant goodbyes (can)
lead to an increased sense
of **loss** and **instability**



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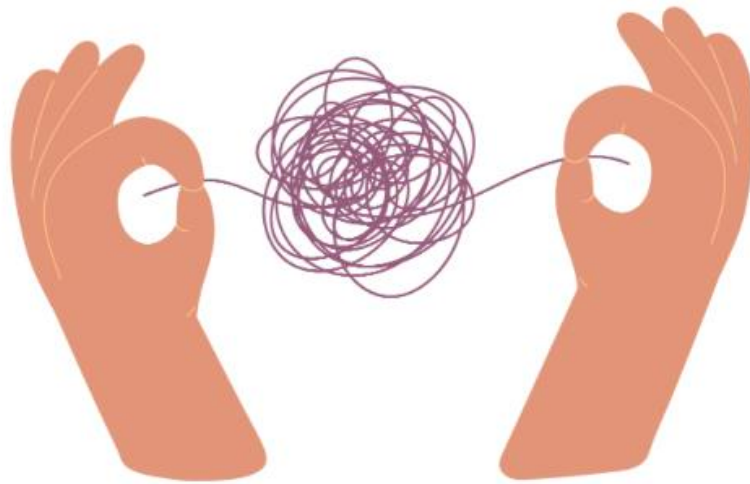


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Leaving & Staying

What makes transitions so hard?

Executive functioning is connected to **grief**



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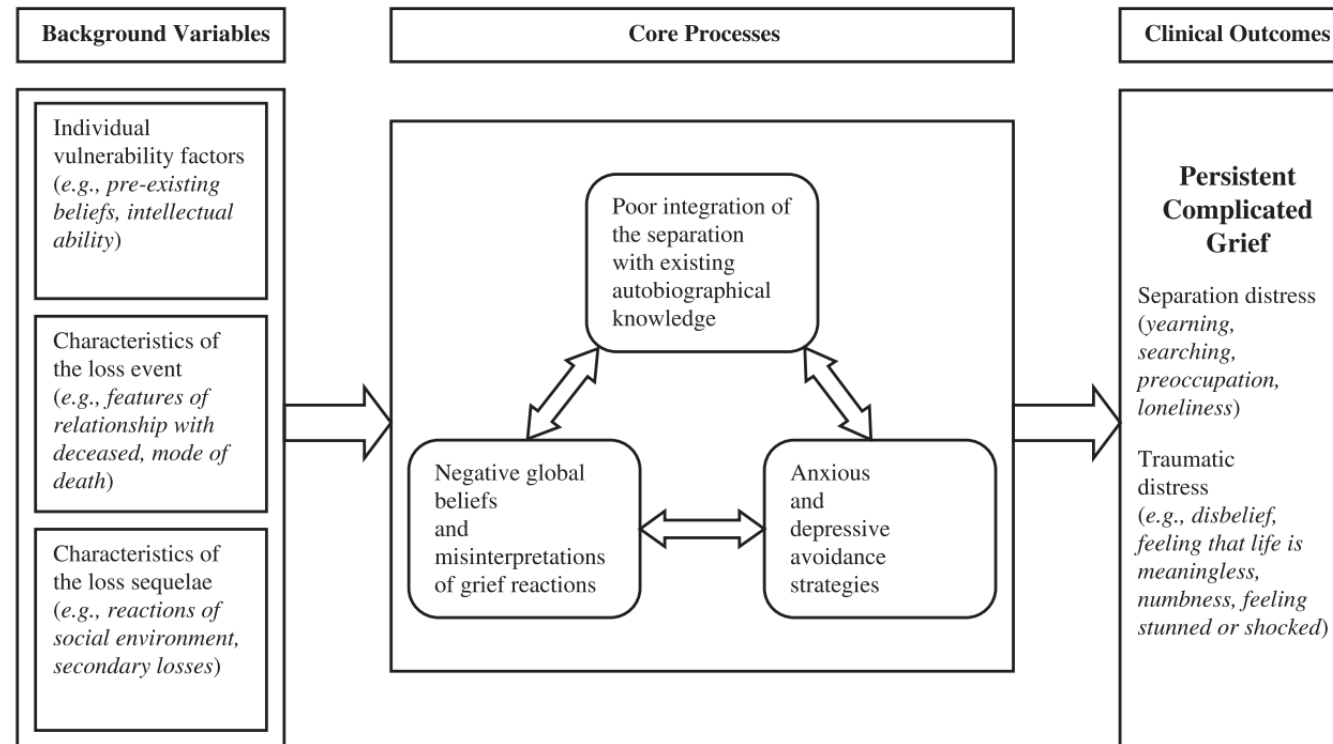


Figure 1. A cognitive-behavioral conceptualization of complicated grief.

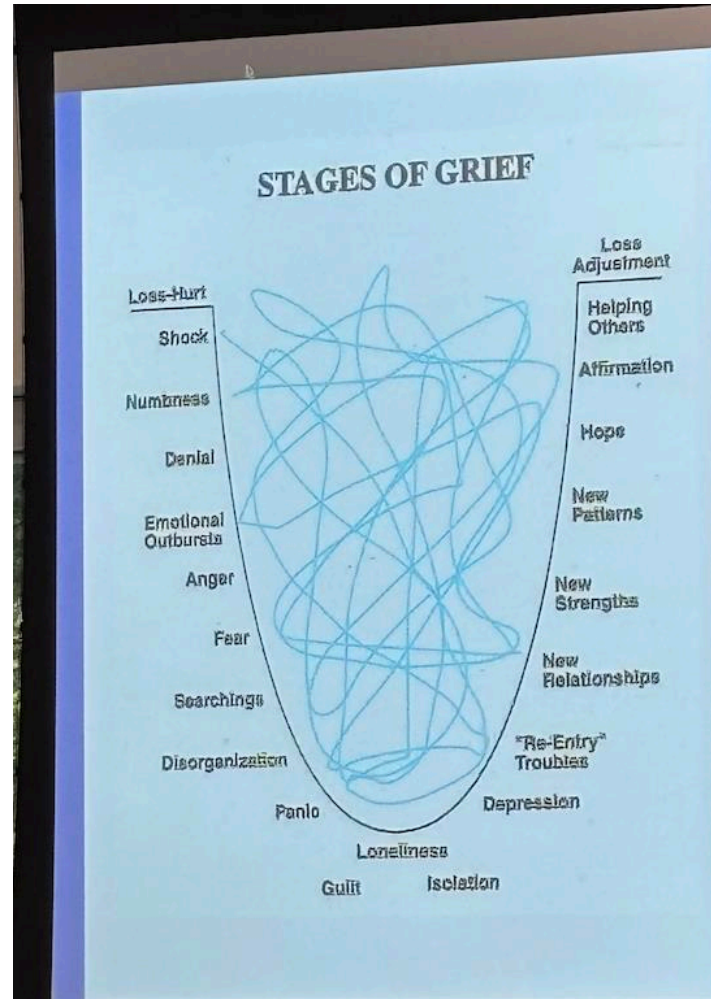


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Leaving & Staying



Valerie Besanceney (SPAN) 2025



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Grief Work

- Psychological processed of coping with a significant loss,
- Everyone does it their **own way**,
- It is not sequential and typically not characterised by linear phases. Instead, it is often **task-oriented** and may feel **cyclical**
- (Possible) tasks:
 - Exploring consequences of the loss for self, life, and the future
 - Sitting with (rather than avoiding) internal experiences
 - Engaging with value-based living



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Leaving & Staying



Indicators your child may benefit from extra support

- Appears out of character (very sad, withdrawn or uninterested),
- Seems emotionally **numb** or unable to acknowledge the loss – as though they are **disconnected** from reality,
- Appears **unable** to set difficult thoughts and feelings aside for a long time,
- Expresses feelings of **shock and disbelief** for a prolonged period of time, unable to accept the loss,
- Engages in **school refusal**, disregarding homework, personal hygiene, etc.,
- Engages in risky behaviours (substance use, recklessness),
- Expresses/demonstrates wanting to hurt themselves or talks about ending their life.



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Leaving & Staying

Therapeutic Goals

- **Normalizing** the internal experience,
- Enhancing **tolerance** for discomfort,
- Cultivating self-compassion,
- Deciphering **useful** ways of expression,
- Connecting with **values in action**.



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Interventions

- Promoting the **integration of the loss** with pre-existing **knowledge** about one's self:
 - Imagery exposure
 - In vivo exposure
 - Confrontation writing
- Replacing maladaptive behaviours for **healthy ways of coping**
 - Exposure to avoided stimulus
 - Behavioural activation
- **Altering** negative cognitions
 - Socratic questioning
 - Behavioural experiments
- “Making sense of experiences”
 - Grief timeline
 - Draw pictures
 - Cognitive restructuring (**not to invalidate**)



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Leaving & Staying

Let's try it!

Timeline

Suitcase (what made it in and what didn't)



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Leaving & Staying



"What is the bravest thing
you've ever said?" asked
the boy.

"Help," said the horse.

stay kind,
stay
patient,
stay
curious

"The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse"
by Charlie Mackesy

