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## Relocation stress a major concern

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It will be a relief for the UAE expatriates if they don't have to immediately depart the country, should they lose their jobs. Compulsory repatriation is significant in terms of personal and family stress for those affected.

If you are one of those subject to redundancy, you could be facing a combination of major stressors.

To lose your job is to lose a large part of your identity and self-respect, as well as causing serious financial uncertainties that can impact on your family life. Any house-move may turn out far more stressful than you were expecting; a sudden disappearance of that familiar scenery that had become a part of you. Suddenly having to pack and leave your home and specially-chosen country, in which you had invested such high hopes, can be a severely disruptive prospect.

As a stress consultant, I can relate closely to each of these crisis-situations, and can empathise wholeheartedly with those who are facing, or potentially facing these challenges.

I once had to counsel a petro-chemical engineer who had been offered more than twice his salary to relocate to Peru, South America. He explained to his wife that this five-year contract would allow them to retire before he was fifty, and she reluctantly agreed to the move.

Yet as the five years went by, it was he who became increasingly homesick, while she made many friends in Argentina.

At the end of the contract, she refused to leave, and he was left to return to his beloved England without her.

In contrast with that unfortunate case, it is worth noting the opposite effect, which probably happens just as often.

A British diplomat in Washington was told that his 12-year-old son was performing badly in all his academic subjects as well as in sports, but had a natural talent for the piano.

Fortunately (as they saw it) the school had a strong music department, and they hoped he might eventually become a concert pianist.

But just then, they were posted to Cairo in Egypt, where none of the relevant schools were very interested in music, it looked gloomy for him.

Yet, surprisingly, it turned out to be a successful move. He made a strong rapport with the physics teacher (who was also the tennis coach), and discarded the image of him being an academic failure. As a further unexpected side-effect, he also developed a lifelong interest in Egyptian history and culture, which would have seemed unlikely to all who knew him in Washington.

There is, therefore, no predicting the outcome of these geographical transitions, but if this experience can be avoided, then hopefully expatriates will continue to bring their talents and richly-assorted cultures to the UAE.

*- The writer is a BBC broadcaster and motivational speaker, with 20 years experience as CEO of Carole Spiers Group, an international stress consultancy based in London.*