

Expatriate Stress

Key Stress Management Strategies for the Expatriate

by Carole Spiers



If you're an expatriate working in the UK – particularly if you're new to the country – you may find yourself subject to a range of 'stressors' that may stop you from fully enjoying the success you came here to achieve.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The adjustments needed to relocate are not only about time zones. Whilst you yourself may have come to terms with working in a new environment, your family could still be getting to grips with the different way of living and the conflicts that this sometimes creates have been known to cause family rifts. Psychological support at times such as these is essential and whilst back home you might have discussed family problems with close friends, in your new environment, this may not always be possible. So what are these so-called 'stressors'?

THE MOVE ITSELF

Moving is never easy. Often one needs help with de-cluttering and sorting out the fine details of the move and at times such as these, it is sometimes necessary to call in professional help. So don't be brave and 'go it alone', plan ahead for the help you might need.

WORKING IN A NEW COUNTRY

Living and working in a new country should be an exciting and stimulating experience – which is why so many people opt to do it. You will be exposed to a culture that may be totally different from your own, and a way of life that may enable you to 'stretch' yourself, both physically and mentally – and sometimes, spiritually.

The downside is that what 'at home' were the most simple aspects of day-to-day living can take on a whole new level of complexity. Buying food, accessing public transport, arranging medical and dental care, driving on a different side of the road, speaking a foreign language – all of these pose hurdles to be overcome, and all at a time when you're trying to do your best to impress your new staff, colleagues or boss.

MAKING NEW CONTACTS

If you've moved to the UK within your existing organisation, you will have a peer group of people around you with whom you share a common bond. If not, it can be difficult to start to network with new people when you don't feel sufficiently confident in doing so, or to sustain the relationships you need to support you when you're feeling under pressure.

GETTING A NEW JOB

If you don't already have a job to go to when you arrive in the UK, then finding one can be a challenge to know how to get started. You may need to take on a different role to the one you're used to; it will take a while for you to build up your contacts and it can be both challenging to know whom you can trust and to whom to give a wide

berth. Then, when you are finally at your desk, there will be issues surrounding tax, insurance, driving licence, bank accounts, schools etc., with which to deal.

PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS

When you enter into any new group or society, it's understandable to try to be 'all things to all people'. If you have a family, you may find that you need to be there for them when they are finding it hard to adapt. If you're a husband, wife or partner, you may find yourself having to juggle many different roles, all of which can put a strain on what, in some instances, could already be a fragile relationship.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you feel that stressors such as these are holding you back, it's time to follow these 10 key strategies for coping with personal stress:

1. Learn to say "No!" to excessive demands
2. Acknowledge that which you cannot change or control
3. Use exercise to help work-off stress
4. Avoid excessive use of nicotine, alcohol, caffeine or tranquillisers
5. Recharge your batteries with adequate rest and sleep
6. Use time-management. Learn to prioritise and delegate
7. Learn stress reduction techniques and practice them daily
8. Book ten minutes in your diary, every day, for personal time
9. Bring in relocation professionals for the move and to help you de-clutter
10. Find a 'sounding-board' - someone who will listen to you.

You have left your home to work in a new country because you want to improve your life, further your career and stretch your horizons.

You can ensure that you achieve these goals by monitoring and dealing efficiently with any stress-related situations either at home or at work. ■

The Author:

Carole Spiers' credibility is rooted in twenty years' success as CEO of the UK's No 1 Stress Management Consultancy. She is a leading authority on Corporate Stress, Motivational Speaker, BBC Guest-Broadcaster and best-selling author.

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