

CARE

Mental Wellness in Shanghai
A publication of Community Center Shanghai

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Solace in Shanghai

Grieving Far from Home

Back Up the Rabbit Hole

The Trials of Repatriation

PLUS!

Boundaries for Teens • Binge Drinking • Knowing Right, Doing Wrong • Culture Burnout

CARE MAGAZINE

Mental Wellness in Shanghai

A publication of the Community Center Shanghai.

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Artist's Bio

Hilkka Virkki is a Finnish art teacher and painter. She was born in 1976 in Kokkola, Finland in 1976 to a farming family of eight. Images of nature and landscapes come through in her art. She graduated in 2008 with a Master of Arts from Helsinki University Art and Design. She currently lives in Shanghai, teaching fitness and painting in her free time.

Cover art: "Morning", watercolor and pencil.

The Editor's Letter

When my husband and I considered moving half way around the world, we thought hard about the health and well being of our loved ones. We are fortunate. Our family members are relatively hale and hearty folks, and there was no looming health crisis keeping us from taking the next step in our lives.

Of course, things can change very quickly. They did for my friend Sharon, whose best friend was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer early last year. A few months later, Sharon caught a plane home to attend the funeral.

Many expats face the pain of grieving for a loved one from abroad. In this issue of CARE, writer Grace Liu explores how to cope with grief and other difficult issues that surround a death in the family back home. Grieving children need special consideration, and Liu has provided a list of ways for children to remember lost loved ones in a positive, healing way.

Repatriation can bring an entirely different sort of loss. The Community Center Shanghai counselors see many expats who are doing their best to prepare for the inevitable jolt of "reverse culture shock". Writer Sascha Matuszak, a longtime global nomad, relates his own experiences with transiency to the rollercoaster of repatriation.

In this issue, counselor Andrea Smolian encourages you to seek help if you or someone in your family is struggling with mental health issues. The CCS counselors have helped people navigate moral crises, find parenting solutions for those bumpy teen years, identify self-destructive drinking patterns and much more – and that is just this issue of CARE. Don't suffer alone. Choose health and mental wellness, and contact the CCS counselors today.

Sincerely,

Rachel Middagh, *Chief Editor*



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Solace in Shanghai

Grieving Far From Home

Being far from family and dear friends is one of the sacrifices we make as expats. But when grave illness or death strikes back home, the distance can seem unbearable. Living abroad adds layers of complexity to efforts to care or grieve for distant loved ones. To find hope in times of heartache, it may help to better understand the nature of grief, and how this process, in time, will offer the gift of solace. **By Grace Liu**

A rollercoaster of emotions

Grieving, no matter where you are in the world, is an extended process that can feel like a rollercoaster ride. The stages of grieving, as described by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, run from denial to anger to bargaining to depression and eventually to acceptance. When the loss of a loved one is sudden and unexpected, the denial stage can be especially heartfelt. While being aware of these stages will not make them go away, it may help to better understand why you are feeling such swings of emotion, and find ways to cope.

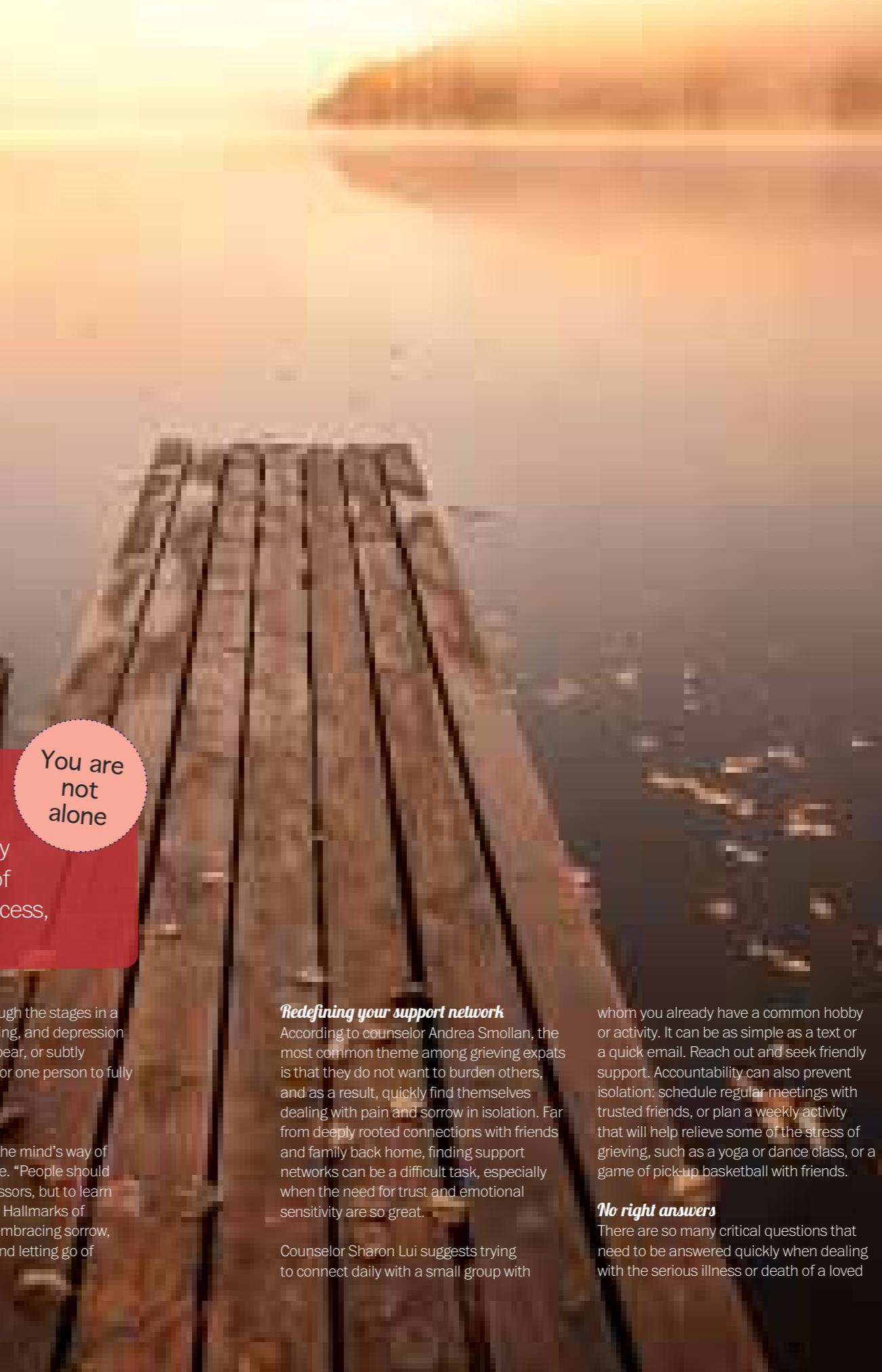
According to Brandi Renee Dillon, a counselor at CCS, everyone experiences this cycle differently. Cultural backgrounds, personalities, coping mechanisms, support networks, religions, life experiences and the nature of the loss all shape the process

of grieving. As such, every person moves through the stages in a unique order and rate. Denial, anger, bargaining, and depression can arise in repeated stages, suddenly disappear, or subtly reappear much later. It may take six months for one person to fully grieve or six years for another.

Allow yourself to grieve

It is important to allow yourself to grieve. It is the mind's way of dealing with loss, and eventually finding peace. "People should not feel they must get over the loss or life stressors, but to learn to accept and cope best," emphasizes Dillon. Hallmarks of acceptance and functional recovery include embracing sorrow, looking forward to growth, accepting reality, and letting go of illusions and expectations.

You are
not
alone



Redefining your support network

According to counselor Andrea Smolian, the most common theme among grieving expats is that they do not want to burden others, and as a result, quickly find themselves dealing with pain and sorrow in isolation. Far from deeply rooted connections with friends and family back home, finding support networks can be a difficult task, especially when the need for trust and emotional sensitivity are so great.

Counselor Sharon Lui suggests trying to connect daily with a small group with

whom you already have a common hobby or activity. It can be as simple as a text or a quick email. Reach out and seek friendly support. Accountability can also prevent isolation: schedule regular meetings with trusted friends, or plan a weekly activity that will help relieve some of the stress of grieving, such as a yoga or dance class, or a game of pick-up basketball with friends.

No right answers

There are so many critical questions that need to be answered quickly when dealing with the serious illness or death of a loved

Signs of Grieving

The following are possible reactions to major life changes, trauma, loss or other tragedy.

Physical

- Appetite changes, including overeating and lack of appetite
- Change in sleep patterns including oversleeping, insomnia, and difficulty falling asleep or awakening
- Amplification of other physical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, allergies, digestion, and migraines

Behavioural

- Experiencing a range of feelings including rage, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, relief, fatigue, abandonment, despair and hopelessness
- Change in energy levels such as the inability to get started and passiveness or hyperactivity and aggressive behavior.
- Withdrawing from others, social isolating oneself
- Reckless or self-destructive behaviors to numb or escape painful feelings, including alcohol or drug abuse.

one. Do you stay in Shanghai or go home? And for how long – two weeks or two months? Should you bring the children?

Guilt can be an overriding emotion when considering what to do, and there may not seem to be a 'right answer' to these questions. "The best response is to remember that adaptation, transition, and emotions are all natural aspects of life," says Dillon.

To help feel good about decisions, Dillon encourages clients to take action, proactively seek support, and look for encouragement. Acknowledging loss and guilt is not painless, but assuaging it through motion and action has rewards. Focus on the factors that are under your

control and search for the positive side of every situation. Tell sick loved ones about special roles they played in your life. Share joyful memories with others. Do what you think is best for you and your family, and realize that no one expects perfection.

Family drama

Estate management, healthcare decisions and legal issues can be very sensitive territory. It isn't uncommon for unresolved family problems to surface when dealing with the practical outcomes surrounding tragedy. Logic can often lose out to emotion, further straining family ties and even driving financial or legal disagreements.

Some expats acknowledge that they are sometimes grateful to be in China, away from family histrionics and drama. Notwithstanding, to avoid tense family relationships, coordinate a group conference with all individuals to discuss controversial topics and collect options. Invite a third party such as a spiritual mentor, clergy, neutral friend, or counselor to help enhance clarity, communication and harmony.

Finding a way to cope

Sharon Lui notices among her executive clients that, most figure out the plan or strategy to survive dealing with a sick family member or loss from a problem-solving point. They are smart and good logistic planners. But when it comes to the emotional part, even if the individual attended the funeral or cremation, upon returning is when the emotions strike. For people accustomed to being in control, it can be an especially disconcerting experience.

Lui suggests scheduling time to express despair, sadness, frustration and other related feelings. The purpose of structured time is not to 'be sad', rather, to have reliable support so as not to allow the emotions to get out of control. Set up an appointment with a friend or counselor that is dedicated to reflecting on the stress, loss, or other emotional reactions. It can be vital to processing grief.

Finding solace can also be a more personal journey. Smollan recalls one client who struggled to cope with her mother's recent death. Certain rituals and activities that she used to do with her back home, such as going for walks, mountain biking, listening

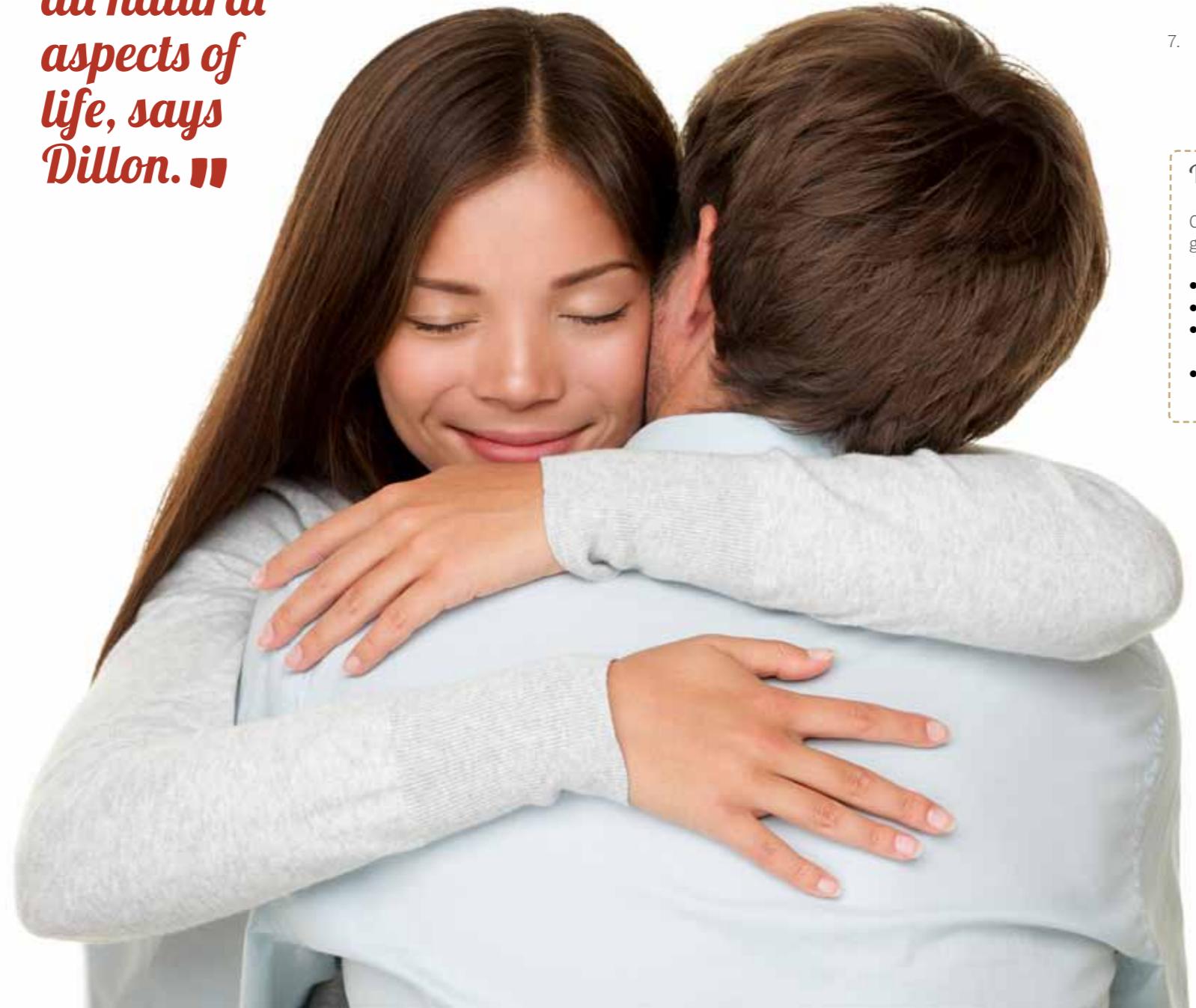
to music they both enjoyed, or reading about topics they used to discuss helped her to feel connected to her mother. These provided her with solace and happy memories.

Grieving in China

In Chinese culture, to ask about grief or bereavement may be frowned upon explains Sharon Lui, a Hong Kong native.

|| The best response is to remember that adaptation, transition, and emotions are all natural aspects of life, says Dillon. ||

She warns to not expect local Chinese co-workers or acquaintances to inquire about illness or death in the family. It may bring 'loss of face' to the person who has lost a loved one, and hence only discussed indirectly as to not embarrass the grieving individual. This cultural gesture may result in misunderstanding or the incorrect perception of "coldness" says Lui, which may not be accurate.



Gifting Yourself Solace and Support: Seven Strategies

1. **Communicate.** Communicating in an honest and transparent fashion with siblings, family and other caregivers at home can reduce stress for the expat abroad who cannot participate in day-to-day care of an ill member or friend. In grief, acknowledge the pain and communicate needs.
2. **Connect.** Friendly connections, cheer from colleagues, and personal interests are more important than ever during times of need and stress. Don't be afraid to reach out. Andrea Mollan has special considerations for single living expats. She suggests seeking companions, family
3. **Accept.** Moodiness, anger, frustration and even exhaustion are all natural reactions to both caregiver stress and grief.
4. **Talk.** In order to understand the distress one may be going through, talk to friends, family, and colleagues about the person who is chronically ill or the loved one that passed, the feelings you have, what is going, what has already happened, the value of the person, the meaning for you. Turn to your faith, spiritual strength, clergy, counselors, or local support groups.
5. **Take care.** Exercise, eat well, sleep well. Respect the mind-body connection.
6. **Express.** In grief, find creative and physical ways to remember the loved one by starting a new ritual or writing letters which is especially meaningful for children. Create a memory box, photo album, journal or collage of their life.
7. **Celebrate and remember.** For a chronically ill person, donating to a charity on their behalf can help one to share their burden. Send flowers on the anniversary date.

When to Seek Help

Consider seeing a professional counselor or grief therapist if:

- You feel that life is not worth living
- You unrelentingly blame yourself
- You are unable to perform daily living activities or social functions
- You feel numb or disconnected for more than a few months

Helping children grieve

A critical part of helping children grieve is to help them understand what dying is. Answer their questions truthfully, and with clear, concrete answers. Do not tell them that dying is like 'going to sleep', and avoid euphemisms like 'we lost grandpa' or 'mommy passed away'. Young children are very literal, and may believe that the person may simply need to wake up or be found. A child needs to know that death is irreversible.

A limited understanding, however, does not mean that children are unaware or unaffected. "It is important that parents don't underestimate their child's perceptiveness and feelings regarding loss," says Smollan.

Modeling appropriate responses will show children how to express their grief. Do not hide your emotions, and explain in clear, simple language how you are feeling. Avoid frightening children with strong displays of emotion – save these for time with your adult friends and family.

Help children to remember those who have passed in positive, proactive ways.

- Write a letter to the person to express their feelings, or simply say the things that they wished they could have said
- Create a memory box or collect keepsakes
- Light a candle on the anniversary of the person's death, or whenever the child feels their loss most poignantly
- Read a book about the passions, hobbies or job that the deceased had, and talk about it. "Uncle Carlos knew all about fish" or "Grandma liked to paint pictures."

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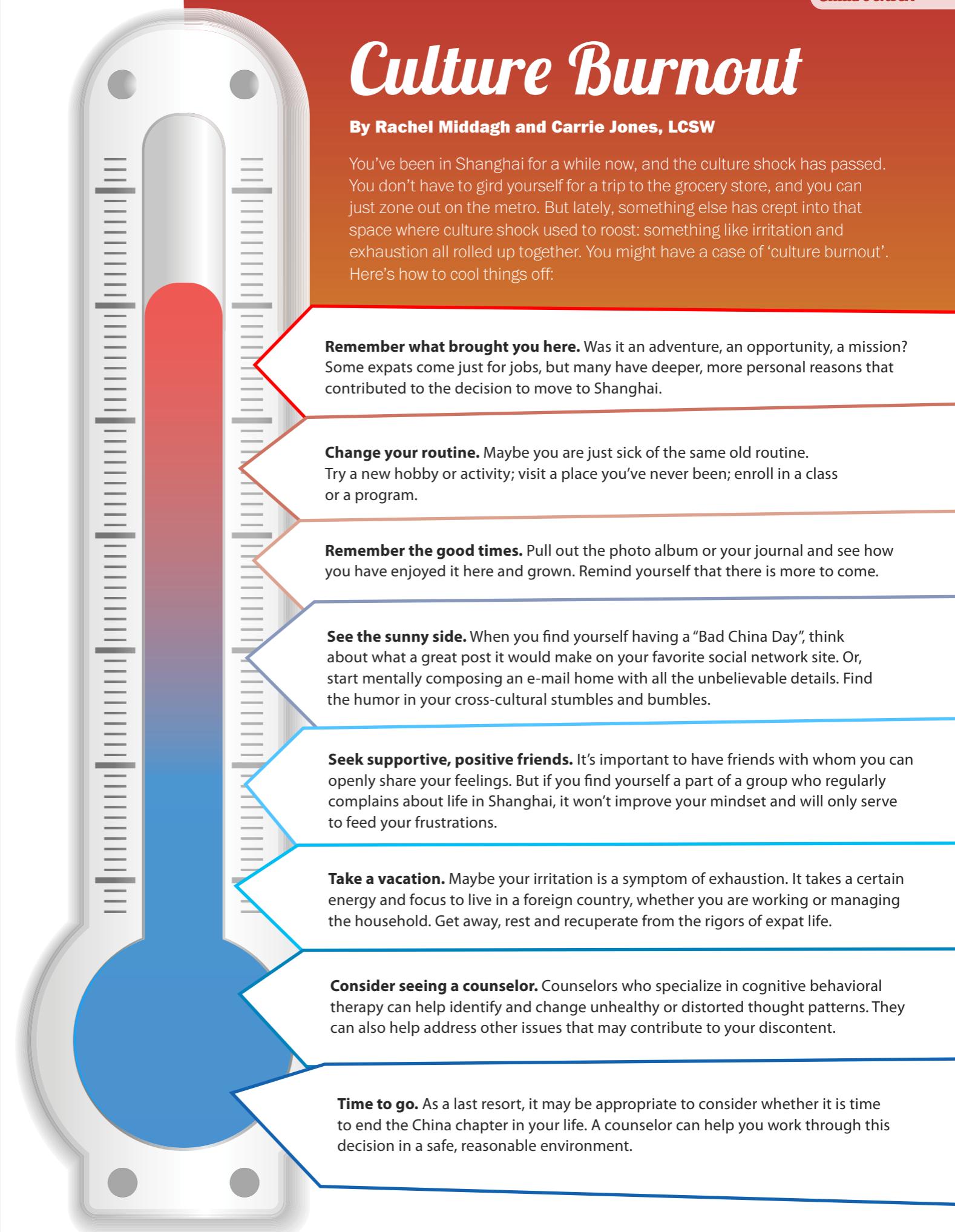
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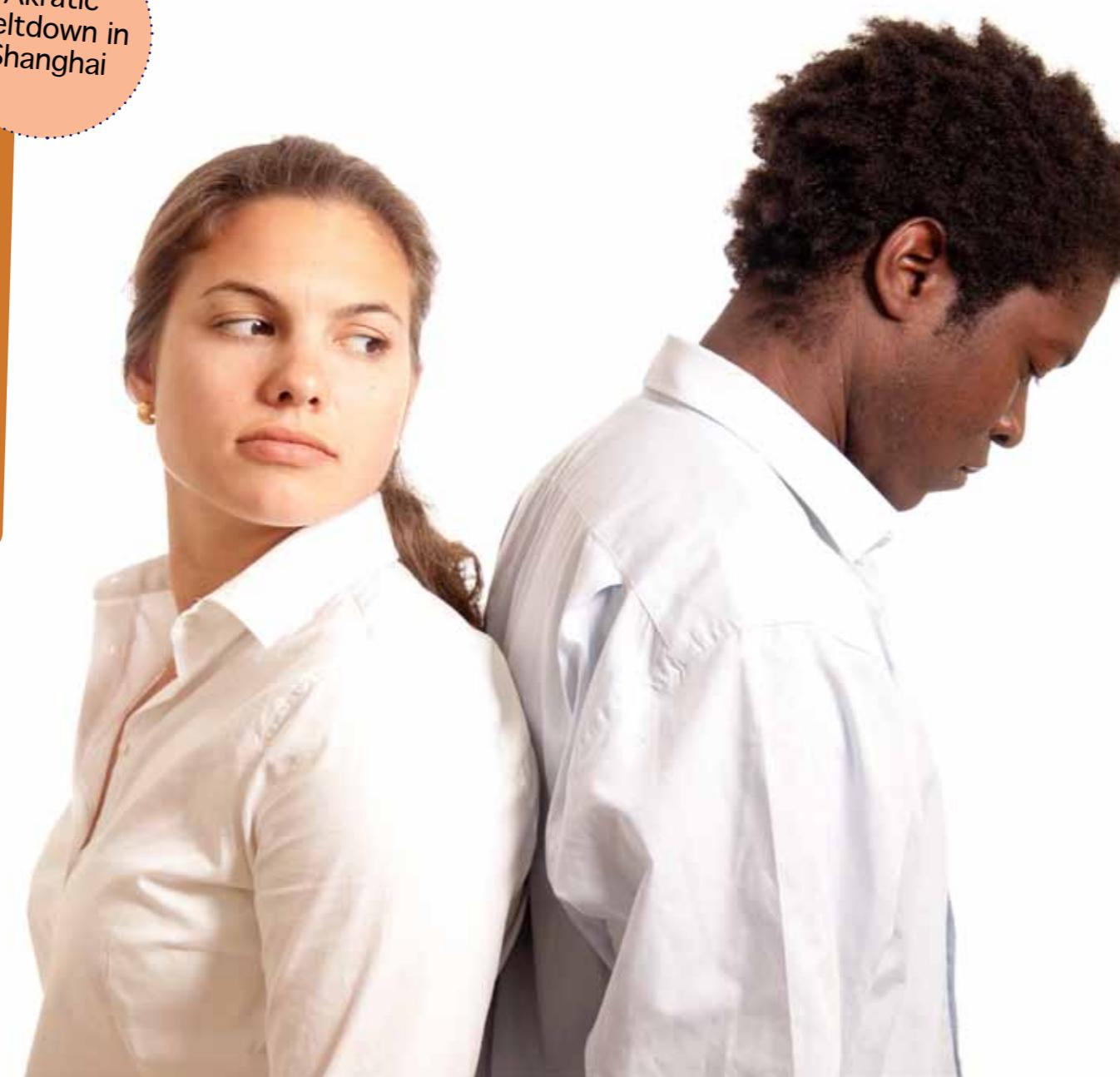
Knowing Right... Doing Wrong

Over two thousand years ago, the Greeks were the first to articulate the concept of akrasia – failure to act in accordance with one's own self-endorsed values. The Roman poet, Ovid, captured the problem of akrasia best, “I am dragged along by a strange new force. Desire and reason are pulling in different directions. I see the right way and approve it, but follow the wrong.”

By Azin Nasseri, MA, PhD (c).

This is part 1 in a two-part series about understanding why we bow to temptation, even when we know it is wrong. Part 2 will discuss how to navigate moral crises.

Akratic Meltdown in Shanghai



Shanghai can offer some unique temptations to expats. For example, it is no secret that many marriages meet their end here. The easy accessibility of sex-related services, the aggressive advances of co-workers, or the late night ‘perks’ at karaoke clubs can test the moral resilience of any individual. For some, the choice is simple: indulge. For others, the choice is equally simple: decline. And for many others, such temptations set off a great internal struggle between desire and fidelity. What sets these individuals, their decisions, and especially their subsequent reactions apart from each other is the type of moral person they happen to be.

There are four types of people in the context of moral commitments: the morally expedient, morally weak, morally strong, and morally excellent.

The morally expedient are people who are generally quite flexible in their moral values and commitments. For example, their commitments towards moral principles such as truthfulness, justice or fidelity are generally contextualized or tailored to fit their own self-interest with little concern for others. These individuals take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, and feel it is foolish to miss out on such opportunities. They would easily alter their moral value to justify their actions so that no guilt or shame would follow.

The morally weak are people who have developed a clear set of values, but frequently fail to uphold their own self-endorsed moral standards. They may believe, for example, in fidelity but have a hard time resisting temptation. This group of people tends to suffer most from psychological conflict.

The morally strong are people who also have a clear set of values and are able to act in accordance to their own self-endorsed values. These individuals understand that they are operating on a set of principles and must uphold them even though it may be difficult. Regardless of personal consequences the morally strong choose to follow their moral principles since it defines who they are. While the morally strong are likely to do what is right, he or she may still have temptations to contend with, whereas the morally excellent do not.

The morally excellent are those whose values, desires, and behaviors are more aligned and in harmony. They do what they know and believe is right and have no other thoughts or desires in conflict with their value system. These individuals have a deep appreciation for their moral commitments and hold a genuine wisdom in understanding themselves and their choices in how to act in any given situation.

Research suggests, that while most people like to have a favorable view of

themselves as being competent, morally authentic, and in control of their own behavior, those whose values differ from their actions tend to think less of themselves and are more likely to be impacted by negative moral emotions – such as shame, guilt, regret, and remorse. Furthermore, these negative moral emotions, if unresolved, may also contribute towards the development of both psychological and physical problems, such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, headaches, and chest pains.

Failure to act in accordance with one's own self-endorsed values may lead to mental confusion and this can then lead into other problems. For example, an individual may react by isolating themselves from family and friends, or they may redirect their own frustration and anger onto other people, which has the potential to destroy relationships. They may also try to justify their actions by blaming others for what they have done.

It is important to remember, however, that no one is perfect. The ability to be fully self-aware and to control and regulate one's impulses, emotions, and desires in a healthy way is not always easy. Few people operate at the level of moral excellence in all things, so one must learn not to be discouraged or overly stressed by moral failings and life mistakes. These failures or mistakes can serve as important life-lessons and contribute towards one's personal growth, development, and success. You are on the right path if you are consciously striving to make today better than yesterday, and tomorrow better than today.

If you do, however, find yourself stressed about a moral conflict in your life, take the time (and courage) to talk to a counselor who can help you understand the nature and dynamics of moral stress and how to navigate through such dilemmas. It is important to listen to your ‘inner sense of justice’, so you can work towards creating a clearer conscience as well as a happier and healthier inner and outer state of being.

“I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is the victory over self.” Aristotle



Spotting Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder



It's usually easy for parents to recognize when their child is physically unwell, but a child's mental health can be more difficult to gauge. Nonetheless, parents have a responsibility for both children's mental and physical health needs. Adolescence is a common time for the onset of mental illness, so be vigilant for signs and symptoms during this period, especially if there is a history of mental illness in the family.

If you suspect that your child is struggling with a mental illness, do not delay in finding them proper care. If left untreated, mental illness can worsen, but if diagnosed and properly treated, the outcome can be positive.

ADHD is a behavioral problem characterized by an inability to pay attention, and is a relatively common disorder among children. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, ADHD is thought to affect 3-5% of children worldwide. Symptoms of ADHD can be seen at an early age.

There are three primary subtypes of ADHD

Predominately Inattentive Type symptoms:

- + Has difficulty paying attention
- + Struggles to follow through on instructions
- + Has difficulty organizing
- + Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring sustained mental effort
- + Easily distracted or forgetful

Predominately Hyperactive/Impulsive Type symptoms:

- + Fidgets or squirms a lot
- + Always in motion, cannot stay in one place
- + Has difficulty playing quietly
- + Talks excessively or blurts out words
- + Interrupts or intrudes upon others

ADHD Combined Type symptoms:

- + Has both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive traits



Paul Wang, PhD
Excomted Clinical Psychologist
Shanghai United Family Hospital & Clinics

What causes ADHD?

The specific causes of ADHD are still unknown, but there are a number of factors that exacerbate or maintain ADHD. These include genetic, neurobiological and environmental factors. Research from the American National Institute of Health indicates that ADHD is highly inheritable and that genetics factor into about 75% of all cases.

Psychological factors such as ineffective parenting and negative interactions can exacerbate or maintain ADHD behaviours, but do not cause them. Psychological factors interact with genetic and neurobiological factors in ADHD.

Exposure to mother's tobacco and alcohol use when the child is in the womb or in very early life has been linked to ADHD. Exposure to maternal smoking can damage the dopamine neurotransmitters in the fetus. Low birth weight may also play a role. Recent studies also suggest that individuals with ADHD have smaller frontal lobes (brain regions involved in self-regulation), smaller caudate nucleus, and reduced cerebral blood flow.

Treatment of ADHD

ADHD can be treated with stimulant medications that reduce disruptive behavior and improve attention and concentration ability. The most effective methods of treatment involve a combination of behavior conditioning, lifestyle change, counseling and medication.

Every child has different needs, and there is no single form of treatment that works for all children. If you believe your child has ADHD, consult a psychologist. He or she will be able to recommend psychotherapy to help your child cope with ADHD, teach positive behaviors and recommend medication. A psychologist can also teach parents and teachers additional skills to help children with ADHD.



Back Up The Rabbit Hole

The Trials of Repatriation

At first glance, repatriation from a foreign placement back to a home country may seem like a return to familiar waters. But more often than not, people returning "home" from abroad find that almost everything has changed, including one's own outlook on what home truly is.

By Sascha Matuszak

Culture shock is a two-way street and can affect everyone – from the seasoned expat to the child born into a nomad family – and it's important to understand the symptoms of reverse culture shock in order to make the transition from one life to another easier for all.

A Tucked-in Tail

There are several telltale signs of repatriation-related stress, including excessive anger toward the home country and peers, a lack of motivation and energy, and elitism toward old and new friends. Most of these feelings arise from uncertainty about new career and life directions, fear of isolation, and the nagging worry that a return from abroad means a "step down" on the social ladder.

For some expats, going home may be perceived as "failure abroad," resulting in one now scurrying back to the old

ways with a tucked-in tail. For adults and professionals, this set of feelings can quickly become overblown and lead to dissatisfaction and even depression. On the flipside, old friends and family may have an "I told you so" attitude towards the "expat phase" that is now over with: it's time to come back to the real world and real life back home. Repatriating expats might feel that the people back home cannot possibly understand the expat experience or relate to a life abroad, which may lead to negative views of both the home country and its people.

Closure for kids

Children face a different set of issues, depending on age. Smaller children crave stability and routine, so for toddlers and children under five, a big move to a different country with a different set of routines can be stressful. But even if the transition phase can be difficult, young

children usually recover quickly as long as new routines lead to a new sense of stability. To help young children prepare and understand the move as a positive thing, experts suggest having a goodbye party before leaving. Taking a short family vacation before the big move may also help, conditioning kids traveling and the exciting prospect of a new life.

"What brings stress to older children is the social aspect. Will they be able to find new friends and to get used to a new school? Most of them have forgotten their first days when they arrived in China and they had to make friends so they feel they will never be able to create what they have here," says Sophie de Fauconval, a counselor with the Community Center Shanghai. Children who have spent time in school abroad may face problems adjusting to a school system unaccustomed to "foreigners", where both teachers and students lack experience with the expat life. Some children may revel in being the new kid, but others will feel isolated and miss their old friends and their accumulated status in their old community.

Communication is the underlying key to preparing older children for repatriation. Speak with your children about the move and

My Story

My own family repatriated several times when I was a child. My father was a soldier in the US Army and my mother was a "trailing spouse." Both my brother and I went to at least 13 different schools in three countries. For a military family, repatriation is a way of life, but that does not diminish the effects of culture shock. Our family became exceedingly insular over the years – my parents have few friends – and as nomad children, we built and tore down relationships, or simply tired to forget about them, on a regular basis.

The worst move was later in my childhood, when I was 18 and my brother was 16. Both of us had strong relationships at school and we had become accustomed to the way of life in Germany, which was a foreign country for us, even though our mother is German. When the base was shut down as part of the US Military's restructuring, my family moved back home to the US, to a city none of us had ever visited before. My brother took it very hard, and his entire personality changed. He went from a sweet, outgoing, sensitive boy to a colder, more protected person. I went through almost a year of depression.

urge them to speak candidly about how they feel. Try and explain why the family is moving, what your long-term goals are and how the move helps fulfill those goals. Encourage your children to maintain contact with friends abroad and facilitate it as much as possible. As with young children, throw a going away party, but let older children create the guest list, letting them choose the people who are most important to them. They might also benefit from giving each person on that list a gift, or a token, before leaving.

What is 'real life'?

According to counselor Sophie de Fauconval, adults suffer from the repatriation blues for more than just social reasons. "One thing I feel that stresses adults out is to lose the advantages which go with expatriation: maid, driver, schools' fees paid, home rent paid, and holidays," she observes. But while the obvious benefits are difficult to part with, there are more profound reasons for missing the expat life.



That being said, some trailing spouses may actually feel better about returning home to "real life". Foreign assignments can leave trailing spouses feeling lost, lonely and rudderless, and repatriation puts them back in familiar waters. But on the other hand, some trailing spouses love life abroad – the freedom, the singular lifestyle, a new identity – and find it very hard to return to a mundane life back home. It's really important to understand that life abroad irrevocably changes one's outlook. One way to describe life after living abroad is to compare it to life after having children. Sure, you still love the things you loved when it was "just you", but you also need friends who also have children and much of your daily routine revolves around a new concept in your life.

For working spouses, a job in a foreign country tends to provide constant challenges and excitement, whereas work back in the home country may seem boring, unfulfilling and, again, a step down from the foreign assignment. Counselor Simona Renzoni suggests that repatriates make personal attempts for a

Resources

It's good to read up on repatriation before making the big move. Below is a brief list of resources that discuss expat-repat issues.

- "Third Culture Kids" by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken
- "Homeward Bound" by Robin Pascoe
- "The Art of Coming Home" by Craig Storti
- "Missionary Kids' Repatriation Narratives" by Amy Collier
- "Repatriation: A How-To Guide for Returning Wisely" by Elizabeth Perelstein and Jill Kristal
- "The Impact of a Foreign Assignment and Subsequent Repatriation Experiences on Eight Returned Expatriates Personal and Professional Lives" By Robert D. Linhares

Websites

- <http://www.expatica.com>
- <http://www.expatwomen.com>
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re-socialization, and try to stay informed about changes, and contact previous repatriates to observe them as role models who know possible negative experiences upon return.

You are a different person

The main keys to managing repatriation are community and communication. Try to combine the two – or more – different communities in your life by focusing on the

positive aspects of both. Don't worry if you feel slightly isolated from your old friends, because you have changed and you are a different person than you were before you lived abroad. Be patient and flexible during the period of adjustment and try to relate your experience to your friends, while at the same time seek out people with similar experiences to your own. This advice goes for all people affected by a big move – children, trailing spouse and working spouse.

“Be patient and flexible during the period of adjustment and try to relate your experience to your friends”



My Story

Now I am 35 and have a family of my own. My wife is Chinese and we have two small children, and we are considering a move back to the US next year. Having gone through several repatriations in my life, I am aware of many of the psychological issues that we may face. Where will I work? How will we pay bills in a much more expensive country? How will my wife handle her own culture shock? Will my young children be able to adjust to a new life, new environment, new language, and new friends? The last time I returned home in 2008, I had all of the symptoms of classic reverse culture shock. Repatriation is difficult for everyone, including life-long nomads and experienced travelers – perhaps especially so, because those with experience may consider themselves immune.

For nomadic families like ours, the key is to first understand that these problems will come up, so when the stress starts building up, we can identify the problems for what they are and try to solve them, instead of taking our frustration out on others.



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Boundaries for Teens A Balancing Act



"Everyone else is doing it... everyone else's parents let them."

What parent of a teen hasn't heard this before? The adolescent years are a time of experimenting and experiencing, growth and development, all with the goal of moving toward independence and being prepared for the "real world." So how does a parent decide what to allow a teen to do and where to draw the boundaries? **By By Carrie Jones, LCSW**

It's no simple job no matter wherever you live, but for those of us living overseas in an international city like Shanghai, it can be even more challenging. Teens quickly pick up on the fact that their friends' families often come from different cultures and have different values, expectations, and rules. Parents don't have the laws and norms of the home culture to guide them in quite the same way they would if they were living back home.

Clearly, there are no simple answers, but here are a few guidelines to help you as you try to manage this balancing act. And balancing act is exactly what it is – teens do need room to test and try out new things, but they also still need rules and structure to protect them and guide them in the right direction.

Do

Listen to, consider, and respect what your teen has to say, whether it is a request, idea, argument, or just basic chatting. This doesn't mean you have to agree with what they are saying; the key is just letting your teen know you are listening with an open mind.

Don't

Compromise on issues that involve your core values.

Do

Respond with empathy. Even if you don't agree with what your teen is telling you or trying to convince you to let him do, respond to the feeling they are expressing. You might say, "It sounds like you really want to be included in what your friends are doing." or "It sounds like you are really curious about _____. You can even grant their desires in fantasy, for example, "I wish I could let you _____, but I can't because _____."

Don't

Lecture and nag.

Do

Have hard conversations early on. Begin having open conversations long before puberty hits.

Don't

Wait until your child is too old to begin talking about sensitive topics like sex and drugs. Don't have topics that are taboo and cannot be discussed. If teens don't get the information from you, they will get it elsewhere and it may not be accurate. You

wouldn't believe some of the creative (but ineffective!) birth control methods and ways to cheat a drug test kids have informed me of that they heard from their friends or found on the Internet.

Do

Share some of your own experiences as a teen with your adolescent. Teens like to know that their parents are human too.

Don't

Feel like you have to share every mistake or bad choice you made. Also don't feel like just because you did something as a teen you can't ask your adolescent not to do the same. I meet lots of parents who are afraid to set firm rules, especially regarding alcohol and drug use, because they feel like hypocrites since they experimented when they were young.

Do

Have clearly defined rules and expectations for your teen with clearly defined and enforced consequences when these rules are broken.

Don't

Make empty threats where you say you will do such and such if your teen misbehaves, but then not follow through when your teen does get in trouble. Teens are smart and will take full advantage of parents who don't follow enforce rules!

Do

Expect your child to make mistakes – we all do! Often, it is from our mistakes that we learn and grow the most.

Don't

Over-react, panic, or have a huge emotional outburst as soon as you learn your child has made a bad choice or is in trouble. I can't emphasize enough how important it is to listen and understand first and then respond.

Finding the right balance requires practice and patience. Good parenting is a skill. As you work to develop this skill, keep in mind the great paradox to parenting teens: to gain control you have to release control. Teens who are given few choices or no say in important matters are those who tend to feel resentful and rebel. Teens who feel listened to and respected tend to push the boundaries much less.

Shed The Shame

Overcoming the Stigma of Therapy

Mary* was raised in a family that taught her to deal with her own problems. However, when she found herself living in a new place, far from her family, she struggled to manage the changes that came with her new lifestyle. After much thought, she eventually sought out therapy. But therapy became her 'little secret', a secret she felt unable to share with her family or friends.

By Andrea Smolian MACP

Living in a foreign place may be very exciting and full of adventure, but for most, it is a big adjustment. People may feel lonely, anxious or even depressed as a result of their new environment. And although these feelings are normal and expected, being far from familiar supports can make these feelings worse. In such instances, professional help might be necessary. But despite the number of people who watch popular counseling shows like Dr. Phil or read 'self-help' books, the shame attached to being in therapy continues to stop people from getting the help they may need.

There are many reasons why one may view therapy as shameful. Some people may feel that they should be in control of their own lives and be able to handle their problems on their own. Asking for help may feel like a sign of weakness. Some may worry that by being in therapy it means they may be 'crazy'.

For others who do seek help, they may find it difficult to tell the people they know that they are in therapy, afraid that they will be laughed at, labelled or pitied. Keeping their therapy a secret may seem like they are protecting themselves. However, it may make feelings of shame and anxiety worse, creating a negative cycle.

Some children may feel therapy is a form of punishment for bad behaviour. Such thoughts may make a child afraid and resistant to meeting with a counselor. In such cases, it may be helpful to explain to the child that they are coming to therapy to work on feelings, rather than putting it in behavioural terms. Comments such as 'you are going to therapy because you have been bad' will only create guilt and shame.

Even though adjusting to life abroad can be truly challenging, simply living in the expat community can be a barrier to seeking help. In the small 'expat bubble', where it feels everyone knows everyone's business, some might avoid seeing a counselor in the fear that their difficulties will be discovered. Additionally, the number of therapists in Shanghai is limited, making some

feel that it is much more difficult to find a therapist that they can connect with. Some choose to struggle alone, hoping that the feelings will simply pass.

Seeking therapy may be daunting especially when you don't know what therapy is or what is available to you. So, what is it? Therapy is about a relationship that is supportive, non-judgemental and thoughtful. It provides a safe place to explore your thoughts and feelings. And it doesn't have to only be a space about problems. It is a space to talk about anything, to help you to be healthier and gain a greater understanding of yourself.

Sometimes it is difficult to admit that you need help and taking that first step is often the most challenging. Coming to therapy is a sign of strength not weakness. You are taking the steps necessary to help yourself. Therapy not only provides support but may help provide relief and understanding of your current difficulties. If you are still reluctant, use the new network you have in Shanghai to ask people who have been in therapy what their experience was. Stigma often comes from lack of understanding, so ask questions and try to gain the knowledge you need to take the steps to make the call.

And if you know someone having a tough time, offer support and reassurance that seeking help is a positive, healthy coping mechanism.



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Dear Counselor

Do you have a question about mental health? Submit it to dearcounselor@communitycenter.cn.

Selected questions will be answered by a member of the Community Center Shanghai Counseling Team. Counselor Melinda Weber responds in this issue. The Dear Counselor e-mail account is confidential and CARE Magazine will not publish identifying information. The column is not intended to replace in-person counseling and should not be used in place of severe or life-threatening concerns.

Dear Party Prude,

While it is true that, in some countries, it is normal to drink more than in other cultures, it sounds like your friend may have a problem with binge drinking. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking as "a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 grams percent or above." In other words, drinking to get really drunk, really fast. Generally, it happens when men consume five or more drinks or when women consume four or more drinks in about two hours. A person who binge drinks is not necessarily alcohol dependent, but there are many health risks that can result from binge drinking such as alcohol poisoning, liver disease, or sexual dysfunction. There are safety risks as well, and your friend is fortunate that she has had people to take care of her when she drinks excessively. Let your friend know that you are concerned for her and are not here to judge her, but you are worried about her alcohol consumption. If she believes that there is a problem and is willing to seek support, she can attend AA meetings in Shanghai, talk to the counselor at your school, or speak to a mental health professional.

Dear Counselor,

I came to Shanghai to do my IMBA. I love it! School is great and I have lots of interesting friends from all over the world. I am starting to get concerned about one of my friends though. We party a lot, especially on weekends, and I think she may have a drinking problem. She drinks a lot and gets REALLY drunk at the bar and someone always has to pretty much carry her home. I have asked her about it, but she says I am just being 'like an old woman' and everyone parties this hard where she is from. I don't know. Does she have a problem or am I just being a prude?

Sincerely,
Party Prude

Dear Counselor,
My son is in Middle School, and seems to be having trouble getting organized. I can see that he is feeling overwhelmed, and his grades are starting to suffer. How do I step in and give him support while still allowing him to take responsibility for his schoolwork?

From Sitting on the Sidelines

Dear Sidelines,
In Middle School, students are expected to become more responsible for keeping their assignments organized and turning their work in on time. This can be a tough transition for children who are used to the extra support and reminders that they receive in Elementary School. If your child is feeling overwhelmed because he is having a hard time getting organized, there are several things that you can do to help him. First, keep in touch with his teachers. Many teachers post their assignments online so parents can see what homework is due. Help your child put all of his work in a notebook and divide it up by subject. Write a list of your child's assignments for this week, starting with the work that is due first. When your child finishes an assignment, have him check that off his list. If your child has a hard time focusing for a long period of time on one piece of work, set a timer for 15 minutes and have him take a 5 minute break after each 15 minutes. While he is working take away all distractions like video games, television, and the phone. If possible, have him work in an area of the home that is quiet. A little accountability might help while your son is striving towards becoming more organized, so you might want to guide him just at the beginning, and check in regularly as the term progresses. Hopefully with your help and the support at school, your son will start to feel more successful.

Brandi Renee Dillon, MA, LPC

Specializes in treating individuals that suffer from depression, anxiety, substance abuse/dependency, cultural adjustment and transition, suicide and other mental health related conditions.

Location: Hongqiao

Times: Monday - Friday, 8 am to 5 pm.

Aiching Liu, LPC

Specializes in cross-cultural relationships, parent-child relationships, marriage conflict resolution, expat adjustment, emotional management, personal growth, career planning, children and teenagers coping skills, EAP. Individuals, couples, families and corporate clients welcome. Also fluent in Mandarin.

Location: Pudong

Time: Monday - Saturday, morning, afternoon and evening.

Azin Nasser, MA, Ph.D (c)

Specializes in marriage counseling, positive psychology, personal growth and EAP services.

Location: Hongqiao

Times: Monday - Saturday, morning, afternoon and evening

Sophie de Fauconval, MSCP

Specializes in treating children and teenagers for anxiety, depression, ADHD, school difficulties, conflicts, opposition. Also welcomes adults. Also fluent in French, understands Dutch and Spanish.

Location: Hongqiao

Time: Monday - Wednesday, morning, afternoon and evening.

Leo Lazo, LCP-I

Specializes in treating children and adolescents for depression, anxiety, family and relational issues, adjustment issues, grief and loss. Is also available to see adults and couples. Also fluent in Spanish.

Location: Hongqiao

Time: Tuesday - Friday evenings, Saturday all day, and Sunday after 3:00pm.

Andrea Smolan, MACP

Specializes in treating adults for a variety of daily difficulties and mental health conditions such as, but not limited to, grief, trauma, depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, eating difficulties, substance dependence, and stress. Also specializes in working with children and adolescents, and welcomes couples.

Location: Hongqiao

Times: Monday - Saturday.

Simona Renzoni, MA, CSW

Specializes in individual psychotherapy with adolescents and adults, treating a broad range of daily difficulties as well as major psychiatric conditions. Also speaks Italian and French.

Location: Hongqiao

Times: Weekdays.

Scott Shen, MSW, LSW

Mainly works with children and adolescents with mental, behavioral and emotional issues. Also available for adult clients with cross-cultural issues and other mental and emotional difficulties. Speaks Mandarin and Shanghainese.

Location: Pudong, Hongqiao and Huangpu

Times: Weekday evenings and weekends.

COUNSELOR DIRECTORY

Community Center Shanghai counselors come from around the world, encompass a broad range of expertise and experience, and offer services in eight languages (all counselors are fluent in English). Counselors are available seven days a week, daytime and evening. There are counseling offices in Pudong, Hongqiao and Huangpu.

If you are struggling with anxiety, depression, infidelity, addiction or any other mental or emotional issue, please contact Carrie Jones, Counseling Director, at counseling@communitycenter.cn or 136 3631 7474. She will help match you to a counselor best suited to your needs.

Counseling Locations

Care Center, Pudong
Lane 333 Biyun Road
Building 8, Unit B 101 A
Tel: 136 3631 7474 (Carrie Jones)

Hongqiao Center
Lane 3215 Hongmei Road
Sheng Lun Lan Building, Unit 201, 5B
Tel: 021-6406-4276

BMF China, Huangpu
588 Yan An East Road near Zhejiang Lu
East Ocean Center, East Tower, Room 24F
Tel: 021-6322-1515x220

Carrie Jones, LCSW

Specializes in children and teens. Also works with adults on issues including anxiety/stress, depression, transition, grief and loss, self-harm, eating disorders, addictions, and parenting concerns.

Location: Pudong
Time: Weekdays and evenings.

Sarah Yang Mumma, LSW

Specializes in treating adults for depression, Dysthymia, anxiety/stress, relationship problems, cross-cultural concerns and low self-esteem. Conversational Mandarin.

Location: Pudong
Time: Tuesdays/Thursdays, daytime.

Melinda Weber, MA, LPC

Specializes in working with children struggling with issues such as grief, dealing with parent's divorce, anger management, behavior management, depression and anxiety. She also welcomes family and couple's counseling.

Location: Pudong
Time: Monday - Thursday, early afternoon to early evening.

Sharon S. Lui, MAMFT

Specializes in marital and pre-marital therapy, relationship issues, cross-cultural marital therapy, anxiety, and chemical dependency. Also fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin.

Location: Hongqiao and Huangpu
Time: Monday - Friday, morning, afternoon and evening. Saturday morning.

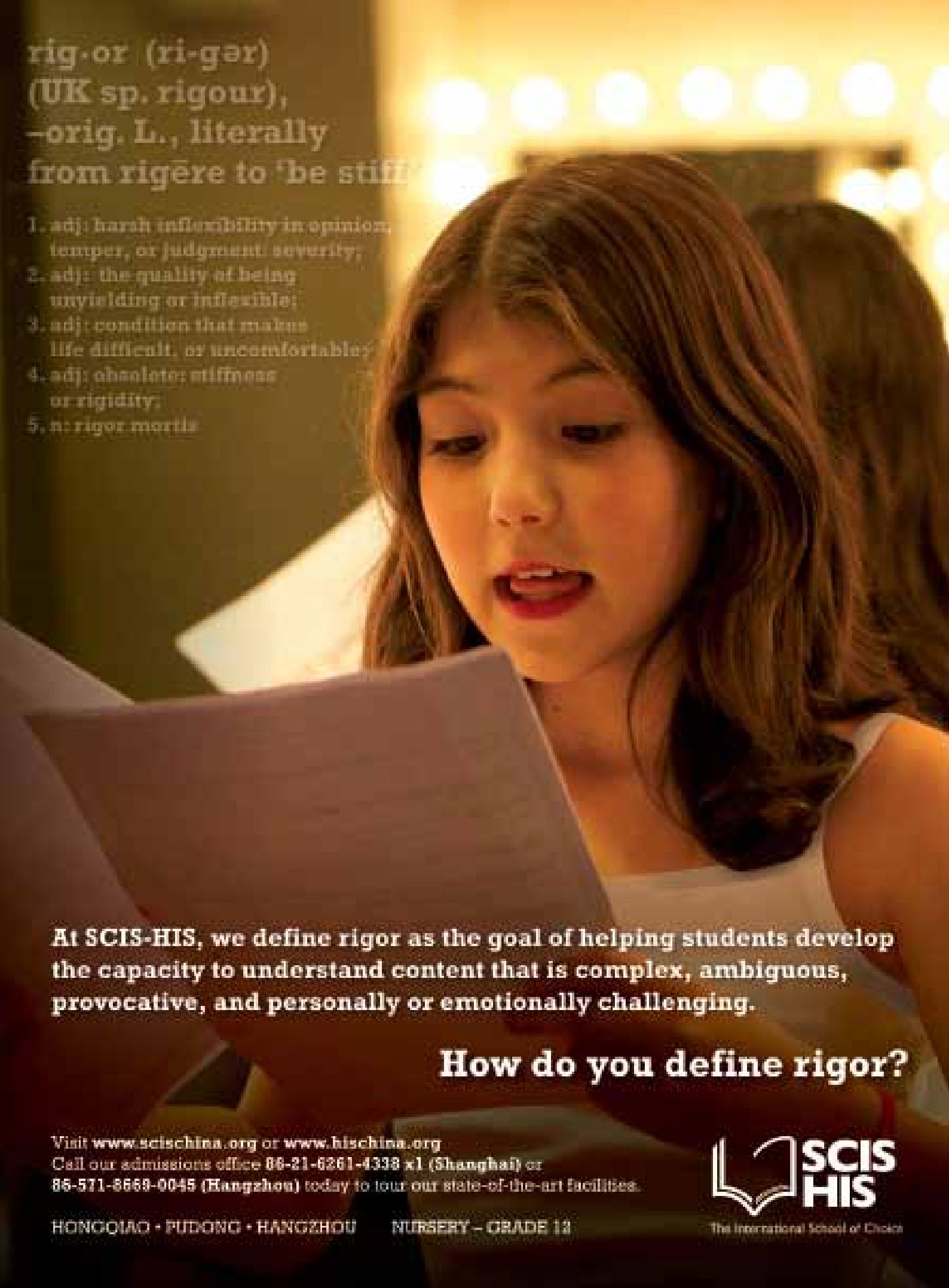
Marisol Gallardo

Specializes in child-parenting problems, marital issues, divorce, and assembled families. Families, couples and individual adults welcome. Also fluent in Spanish.

Location: Pudong and Huangpu

rig·or (ri-gər)
(UK sp. *rigour*),
—orig. L., literally
from *rigere* to ‘be stiff’

1. adj: harsh inflexibility in opinion, temper, or judgment; severity.
2. adj: the quality of being unyielding or inflexible;
3. adj: condition that makes life difficult, or uncomfortable;
4. adj: obsolete: stiffness or rigidity;
5. n: rigor mortis

A young girl with long brown hair is singing into a white microphone. She is wearing a light-colored top and has a joyful expression on her face. The background is dark, and there are bright lights visible at the top of the frame.

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