



Parenting TCK's Through Transition

Missionary Care 2026



Objective:

To equip parents to care and support their children as they navigate transitions that come with being a Third Culture Kid.

Let's Talk: Round Robin with the people around you

What are some of the transitions you have faced, are facing this year, or will face with your kids in the next term?

Ask one person from your group to be ready to share with the larger group.

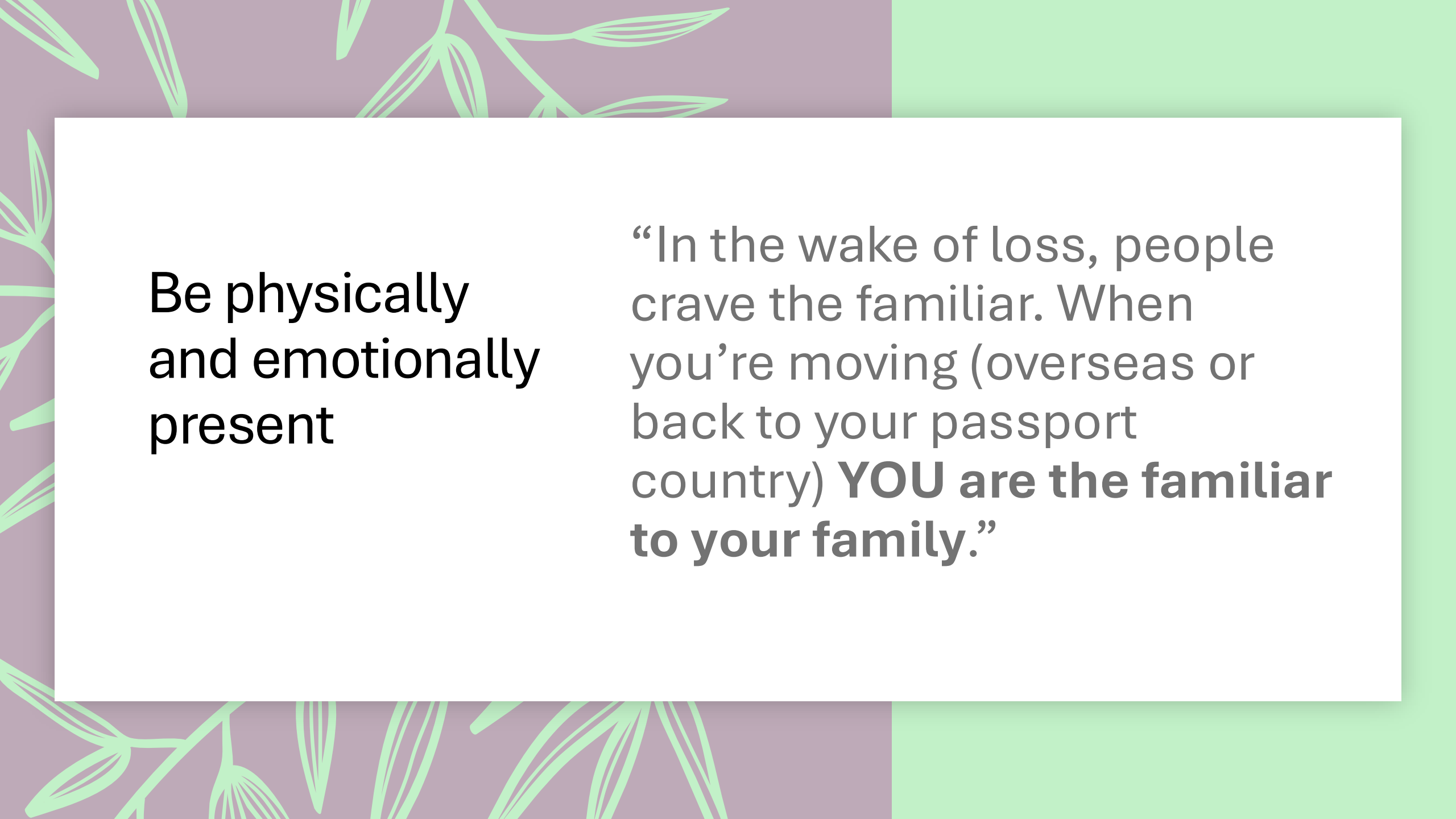
Create space for
communication

“When you show that transition is hard for you, that gives them permission for it to be hard for them too.”

–Raising a Family Overseas

Rule of the Oxygen Mask...

“It can be very easy to sacrifice your own emotions and needs on the altars of productivity and caring for everyone else. It might even seem more selfless, or strong, or godly, or holy to forgo your own needs for the sake of your children, but not only is this not sustainable, ***it teaches your children to do the same.***”



Be physically
and emotionally
present

“In the wake of loss, people
crave the familiar. When
you’re moving (overseas or
back to your passport
country) **YOU are the familiar
to your family.**”

Be their advocate

- Extended family members
- Well meaning Church people
- Social Cues and vocabulary differences
- Making phone calls and daily life activities

Acknowledge
the stress

“Play is the antidote to
stress.”

- Raising up a Generation of Healthy TCK's

“It is during the most high-stress times that TCK’s need for emotional support goes up, while their parents’ mental and physical capacities to meet their children’s needs (and even their own!) goes down.” -Raising up a Healthy Generation of TCK’s



Know the differences: Emotions vs Feelings vs Mood

Emotions

- Immediate
- Intense
- Objective
- Temporary responses to stressors from the outside world
- Physiological responses
- Have very little control over them
- Control how we *respond* to them
- Arise from the inner part of our brain that is not adept at logic

Feelings

- Delayed
- Less intense
- Subjective
- Longer lasting
- Mentally processed concepts
- Provide understanding to emotions
- Influenced by our past experiences, opinions, and beliefs
- Arise from the logical part of our brain

Mood

- Delayed
- Prolonged
- Generalized
- Descriptor of overall state of being
- Mood shows momentum and direction
- Does not arise from a particular stressor
- Arises from an accumulation of stressors, interpreted as a whole

What's Normal for Children?

Red Zone

- Big emotions
- Developmental reverting
- Lots of complaints
- Behavior challenges
- Difficulty learning new concepts or focusing
- Depressive or anxious demeanor

Yellow Zone

- More "good" days
- Starting to look forward to things
- Fewer behavior challenges
- Starting to engage
- More typical demeanor
- Able to identify potential good friends

Green Zone

- Can name friends who they enjoy spending time with
- Feel cared for by an adult other than parents
- Know what to do for fun
- On track academically
- Back to their typical demeanor/personality
- Have things they're looking forward to

Getting Ready

Arrival



3-6 months
before departure

2-4 weeks

~ 3 months

3-6 months

The
6 month
Slump

6-12 months

What's Normal for Adults?



- Big emotions
- Apathy
- Not enjoying anything
- Feeling irritable
- Difficulty learning new concepts or focusing
- Depressive or anxious demeanor
- Unhealthy coping



- More "good" days
- Starting to look forward to things
- Feeling more like yourself
- Starting to engage
- More typical demeanor
- Can identify potential close friends



- Starting to feel a sense of normalcy
- Know who some good friends are
- Know what to do for fun
- Feeling more on track academically/with work/language learning
- Back to your typical demeanor/personality
- Have things you're looking forward to

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3-6 months
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A liturgy on “The Journey”

-by Heather Fallis

While our backpacks grow heavy and our bodies grow weary from the weight of the in-between, the transitions, the losses

-we hand our burdens to our Father, steady our footing on our firm Foundation, Faithfully plodding forward with our Friend, Jesus

-our fellow Traveler-who is both preparing a Home for us, and walking with us toward it every step of the way.

Resources: Some of our favorites!

- Raising up a Generation of Healthy TCKs by Lauren Wells
- The Grief Tower by Lauren Wells
- Third Culture Kids: A Gift to Care for by Ulrika Ernvik
- Making Peace with Change: Navigating Life's Messy Transitions with Honesty and Grace. by Gina Butz
- Raising a Family Overseas by Anna Danforth
- A Caring Family by Aaron Santmyire
- Liturgies for Life Abroad (Several available volumes and more coming!) by Heather Fallis
- Re-Entry Experts by Shonna Ingram