

ENERGISING

goals

TOP CHALLENGES OF

Expatriate Life

BY BEATA JUSTKOWIAK

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## TOP CHALLENGES OF EXPAT LIFE

# Friendships

Almost every single person wants to know what's the quick fix in getting better in making new friends and maintaining friendships in busy life, especially expat's life.

Most people find it hard to create a deep and meaningful friendship in adulthood, but it's not impossible if you know what to do.

Ever wondered why all of ideas and advices you have tried to create friendships, are not as brilliant and as effective as you hoped?

**Simply because they lack of trust.**

Trust in a meaning that you believe in yourself,  
that you know you will handle every situation,  
that you trust your inner recourses and capabilities,  
trust that you will use both, your heart and mind to be real, to be yourself.

**Life changes such as moves, career transitions, relationship changes and different family stages bring a shift in our friendships. We often drift apart hoping to stay in touch with close ones.**

Unfortunately the close relationships aren't guaranteed to last and this is why we all should update our toolkit of making and maintaining friendships regardless of age, job and relationship status.

### **The fundamentals of friendship**

1. Reciprocity
2. Acceptance
3. Openness
4. Trust

**The perception of openness, trust and intimacy arouses fear, and that's natural, as we wouldn't expect our friend to reject us, betray or cause pain.** But because we are social being we learn not only by mistakes made but also by experience of others.

This is why we know what each friendship has some requirements, demands. In order to deal with it, **we naturally grow our flexibility in the approach, we balance acts of giving and getting, we continuously increase our self-awareness to understand feelings, needs and be present in the moment.**



**Unrealistic expectations about friendship are the sources of suffering and growing fear.**

Agreeing with well-known and respected personality psychologist Wiesław Łukaszewski, we can say out loud, that

*“Friendship is full of paradoxes. On the one hand it is a form of necessity because the lack of friends can be fatal socially. On the other hand, it is an act of free choice because nobody will appoint you a friend. Friendship is the experience of long-term (not just for one day), on the other hand it is a single experience as broken friendship rarely revives. We gain friends for a long time and loose irretrievably.”*

**Making a change isn't easy when you don't know what to do and how.**

I have a practical exercise, which I often use with my clients during coaching sessions that I'd like to share with you.

Let's start from roots of your expectations.

Give yourself 10 minutes to think about questions I prepared for you:

- What does friendship mean to you?
- When do you know that a person is becoming your friend?
- When do you know that it's not just a stranger with familiar face anymore, or neighbour with whom you occasionally exchange 'how are you'?
- What makes friendship so special, so valuable?
- How your life would look like without a friendship?

Knowing the expectations you can create an action plan.

## **TOOLKIT for managing the FRIENDSHIP**

For friendship to form, you will need:

1. Consistency
2. Acceptance
3. and Emotions

### **1. Consistency.**

Kids play ever afternoon or every weekend with a close friend. As adults, we rarely have that kind of consistency outside of work but when we join a group that is formed and meets regularly, the consistency is already built in. That's why you know it's better to join some group and slowly introduce yourself to them.

## 2. Acceptance

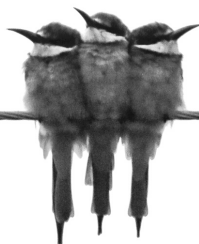
Knowing that you will feel uncomfortable, awkward and insecure, accept it. Expect it to happen and then it will scare you that much any more. Accept that you do have inner resources to manage each situation. Wondering what are the inner recourses? You have your instinct, you have your empathy and emotional intelligence, you have your knowledge and previous experiences with having successful relationships. On top of that, you have time, language, beautiful smile and curiosity. You have a lot to offer so be curious what you will find out about people.



### 3. Emotions

To deepen relationships you must be willing to open yourself up. This is the aspect of emotions I mentioned before. It is well proven that vulnerability is the key to emotional bonding. Without exposing your true emotions, without acknowledging it and sharing the friendships tend to feel superficial and meaningless. Easiest step here would be using the situation that makes everyone to feel vulnerable, such as public speaking training or cooking class when you have two left hands. Each moment when you have a chance to provide comfort or support, when you feel needy and helpful, are those situations that builds bonds.

**Finding a friend is relatively easy but building a friendship is great challenge.** Remember, it's important to work hard and to keep the communication upbeat 😊





## TOP CHALLENGES OF EXPAT LIFE

# Loneliness

**Loneliness can be really BIG.**

From excitement to paralyzing loneliness. Expat's life is one of the most challenging experiences we face. Sometimes it can be really bumpy ride with few stops on an emotional rollercoaster. Knowing how to manage and overcome its setbacks is essential to living the life you want. Beata Justkowiak, an expat therapist based in Singapore talks about the effects of loneliness and how to manage growing isolation when living or working overseas.

**GOODBYE MY LOVE**

As an expat I have to say goodbye almost constantly. On so many occasions I learnt to leave, to move on, to say 'see you' and to say 'was nice knowing you'. As old saying goes 'practice makes perfect' the frequency of saying goodbye increased but ease of doing so has not. I have been saying goodbye to people since I was 19. I moved to different city to study, to grow personally and professionally and since then I have been practicing the art of 'moving on' or away. Whichever way I decided to move, the struggle of saying 'bye' came up immediately..

## PSYCHO WORLD

Being a psychologist I have a natural tendency to explore and dig deeper for better answers. I started the process on myself. I observed my own reactions when someone tells me goodbye and what feelings it triggers. Later, I observed others and what I noticed has not surprised me. People suffer when they need to say goodbye. They have tears in their eyes, they do not want to let go of good moments, of good relationships, of good, familiar life. They are forced to let go or to convince themselves that 'it is ok (or it will be), 'it is for better' or 'nothing will change'. Despite knowing what to expect, why does it not become easier for us to move to next chapter, to say goodbye? It is because we do not want to accept it and we are trying to trick our mind by saying all the above. Our brain knows exactly that in fact a lot of things will change, a lot will be new and not necessarily comfortable for us, that we are trying to trick ourselves.



## **LONELINESS, IS THAT YOU?**

Being an expat myself, and working with expats showed me more than I expected from saying goodbye and effect it had on me. **The feeling of loneliness is acute.** Not only here in Singapore but in expat's life. **How to recognise the loneliness?**

1. When you miss the company of friends and family, your safety net-  
When you miss the familiarity of the life you left behind.
2. When you compare everything to how easy and comfortable it was  
back in the past
3. When you compare your life to others and you feel they are in much  
better position than you
4. When you don't want to move on, you want to move backwards
5. When you chat with your family more than you expected and only they  
know about your true feelings.

## **"BUT I DON'T WANT TO MOVE ON"**

- Being homesick is ok
- Feeling restless is ok
- Missing friends is ok
- Not knowing how to move on is ok

as long as you are open to create your very own way of making the next step.

Working on loneliness and self-esteem highlighted the fact of how **strongly people do not allow themselves to feel negative emotions, to have negative thoughts, to be in a negative mood.** Having inner fight is not healthy and this is why finding new way of managing it is so wanted.

**What are the actual struggles we can link with sense of loneliness:**

- Lower self-esteem
- Perfectionism
- Lack of healthy self-confidence
- Unbalanced self-expectations
- Constant comparison to others
- Lower ability to make friends, to reach out, to maintain relationships.

**What do we hear at the back of our heads?**

I'm not good enough

I shouldn't struggle with it

I have to do this and that

I can't..

I don't know..



## LEARNING TO BE

When I think about managing loneliness I mean creating something that will work not only once or twice, but something that will be the base for managing strategy to build the happy life. For me it was FINDING myself. After 5 months of new life in Singapore where I constantly felt as the tallest outsider, I realised that one thing I know for sure, is that **I am here every single day, and I will be, so I decided to be here for myself.** Not because I had to, not because somehow I was in this situation. I decided to turn it around and make it my own decision, be for myself, every day. Learn to push through bad days (not with denial) and grow as a person.

## UNDEFINED FRIENDSHIP

Somehow people were always coming into my life and we would often share very intense friendships. **When I'm lucky and there is a right person with whom I just 'click', it's usually an intense and short-lived friendship, which is not easy to accept.** Of course, some have turned into lifelong friendships, some are just there on Facebook, and others have disappeared. That's how it is and how we as humans decide to act.

I have learnt to appreciate all those kinds of friendships, as they all are part of the beauty in itself.

## WISE WORDS

While feelings and situations are often similar, the solutions need to be tailor-made to fit each individual. This is what I always tell my clients, when you talk to your family and friends ask what do they think about a particular situation so that you get their perspective. Do not ask what would they do, what they think you should do, or what would be best. Do not turn the conversation into 'I need your advice because without it I'm unable to make my own decision'. It will only strengthen the belief that you cannot do it without them, without others, without someone... **You need to practice one thing - knowing that you can manage everything you will face,** and getting external perspective is one way to browse through visible options or get inspired to create new ones.

## Top 5 tips for managing the LONELINESS

1. Observe your reactions to feeling lonely. Allow yourself to feel (good and bad) to eliminate destructive mechanisms such as avoidance and denial.
2. Try new way of conversing with friends and family, ask about their perspective.
3. Count your friendships, not friends. See what and how many types of friendships you have in your life in order to decide which of those you want to multiply.
4. Notice what you tried to improve this far and what you have accomplished.
5. Don't waste time on something that does not work.



## TOP CHALLENGES OF EXPAT LIFE

# Emotions

## EMOTIONAL COCKTAIL

### How to deal with difficult emotions?

**When stressed, you do not have the access you all your resources.**

You can't remember things during the job interview but the minute you leave the interviewer room all is good and as normal. Or you are about to have a tough conversation with your partner and you put it off, procrastinate, but you are really running away from fear that you feel. Or you don't know why you feel panicky inside and you let it out by throwing plates, shouting at your kids or worst suppressing and pretending it does not affecting you, which does not help neither you, nor the environment around you. Therefore, it is worth to know how to cope with difficult emotions and what in fact an emotion is.

If you feel thirsty, it is not an emotion but physiological feeling. You need to feel thirsty to satisfy specific needs so your body survives. Without thirst, you wouldn't be motivated to drink. If you feel thirsty but because of some reason you can't drink as you are in the meeting or you are driving a car, you may feel upset and frustrated. Frustration is already an emotion.



**Emotion is an interpretation of both your thought and body sensation.**

Remember that an emotion doesn't last forever.

When you know how to identify an emotion you have great control over it.

**There is no good or bad emotion;** it's all about the intensity of it, context, use and way of expressing it. What I personally found useful during working on managing emotions is to **scale it**.

Ask yourself what and when do you feel. "What do I feel now?" and follow it by "What proportion would be the most adequate?" to know how many emotions do you want to feel. When you've done this, I would like you to try name the emotion that you feel. Such as, I feel sadness, I feel anger, I feel joy, I feel disgust, I feel enthusiasm. It is essential to bring self-consciousness regardless of it being positive or negative emotions. With self-consciousness you are equipped to cope, to manage emotions because naming it showings you what to work on.



**Common mistake is to say 'I am sad'.**

By saying it you acknowledge that you are sad and instead of changing emotion you will demand your mood, your attitude to change as you've said 'I am sad'. Don't bring your emotion to the level of your personality, your identity. Be precise. When you feel sad, say **'I feel sad/sadness'** and then you are ready to work on the emotion, the sadness.

Observe yourself, take a mental picture of the emotions and practice managing them instead shaking it up or bottling it (and waiting for an inevitable explosion).

**.Believe that only you are responsible for what you are feeling and how long.**

External situations will keep appearing and surprising you but how it will make you feel is in your hands (or mind actually).



**There are 3 quick self-coaching actions you can do, to manage difficult emotions:**

**1. Change body position,** as it influences emotional states. Straighten up, even stand up, move your feels and legs a bit, make additional gestures to improve blood circulation.

**2. Change you voice intonation,** you can try two different way, be overly dramatic and then overly serious. Send your brain a signal to change emotion.

**3. Take a slow deep breath,** to observe emotions from calm perspective. When controlling your breathing, you control your emotions.



## TOP CHALLENGES OF EXPAT LIFE

# Fear

**Fear** manifests itself in the form of worry, tension, anxiety, confusion and all well known '**What if..?**' scenarios. We fear everything, so naturally we attempt to control or prevent what we fear most. The difficulty is that, **fear keeps us focused on the past and constantly worried about the future.** The key question is how do you perceive stress?

## **A challenge or threat**

A high level of anxiety causes people to achieve results below their normal capabilities in any field. People who are fearful are very hesitant to explore new concepts or embrace other possibilities. You can always estimate the level of a person's fear by how they explore new surroundings and inspect objects around them.

Studies show that regardless of age, women have higher levels of anxiety than men. They more intensively compare themselves with others, which is linked to the image of women in magazines, social medias but also public expectations to variety of roles in life women needs to face.

Society tends to tell us how to be good mother, wife, daughter, friend – how to live and this is why we often stop ourselves from expressing what is cumulating inside.

**We stop ourselves from verbalising an opinion, from a right to disagree, from saying equally YES and NO, and at the end we try to stop to feel when told we are too emotional.**

It's crazy to choose to live like this in a long run.



## **Recognize the fear**

Being an expat myself and working as Expat's Coach, I have observed the most common symptoms of fear. Here is the list for you to have a look at and see if any of it sounds familiar.

### **Cognitive Symptoms - IN YOUR MIND**

Indecision, Embarrassment, Heaviness, Dark thoughts, Poor concentration, Exasperation, Forgetfulness, Loss of confidence, A feeling of weakness, Continuous dissatisfaction, Inability to follow instructions, Thoughts about avoiding situations

### **Somatic symptoms - IN YOUR BODY**

Elevated blood pressure, Heart pounding, Rapid breathing, Butterflies in my stomach, Adrenaline rush, Dry mouth, The need to urinate, The stiffness of the neck and shoulder, Lack of appetite, Insomnia, Nausea.

### **Behavioural symptoms - IN YOUR ACTION**

Nail biting, Excessive caution, The violence of the movements, Closing in itself, Unusual manifestations of aggression, Eye contact avoidance and Covering face with hands.



As you noticed, most of 'visible' symptoms are inside of you so **if you keep stopping yourself from seeing it, feeling it, expressing it, you keep hurting yourself.**

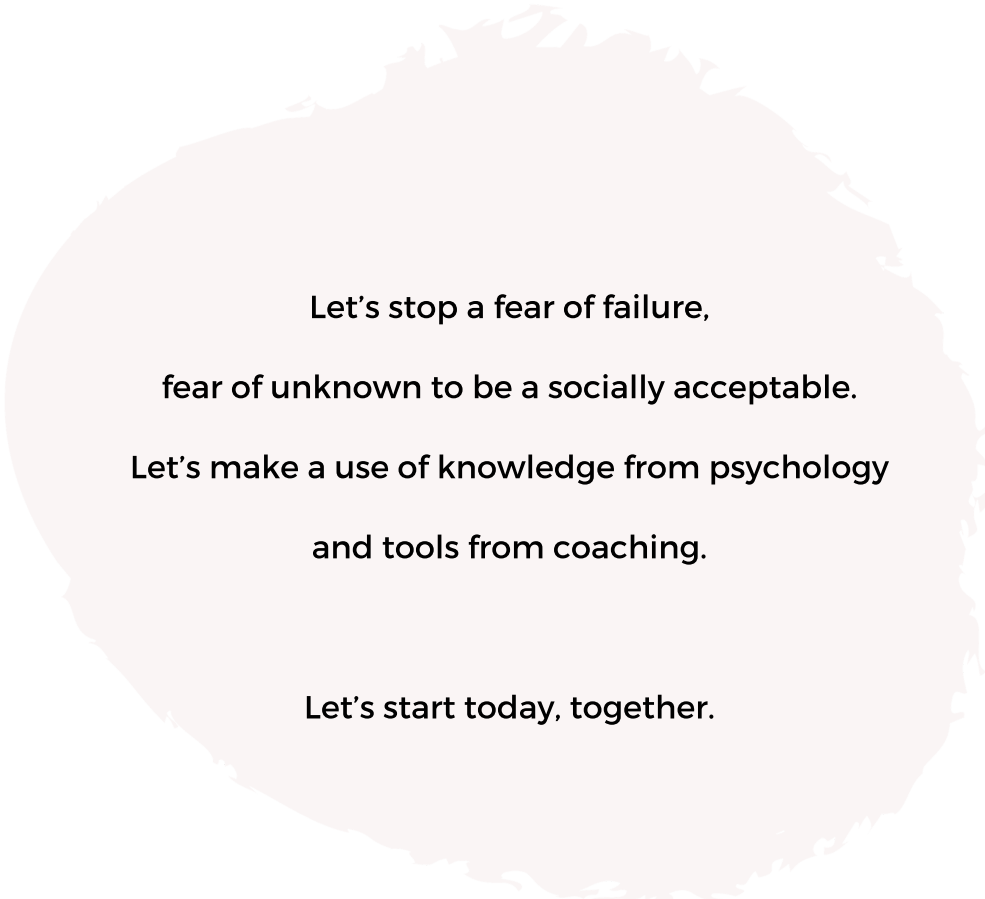
Fact to memorise: our brains are poorly equipped to weigh risks that don't result in immediate negative consequences.

Psychology research suggests we generally like to be able to anticipate consequences. That's why the act of falling can be so frightening; we don't know what to expect when we land.

Let's say you are afraid of your future. What you really fear is the uncertainty that surrounds events yet to happen. By living totally in the present and by planning ahead you can reduce the uncertainty and fear. You cannot plan for all uncertainties but being prepared to an extent reduces your fear of uncertainties. Learn the art of enjoying it, too.

**A lot of times, our worrying can make the problem even worse. All the worrying in the world will not change anything.** All you can do is to do your best each day.

Helpful tools which you can use daily are **MINDFULNESS** and **VISUALISATION**.



Let's stop a fear of failure,  
fear of unknown to be a socially acceptable.  
Let's make a use of knowledge from psychology  
and tools from coaching.  
Let's start today, together.



# BEATA JUSTKOWAIK

Ex-athlete, Psychologist and Life Coach working with individuals and corporates. Known as confidence expert, Beata is probably the **most energetic psychologist** you have met.

A mental wellness advocate, she **takes psychology out of the therapy room** and proves how practical it can be in managing life's challenges.



Beata specializes in facilitating **lasting change**, she works with men and women who are ready to improve their health, increase energy levels, shed self-limiting behaviours, and cultivate positive habits.

She takes life with its ups and downs. She loves dark chocolate, complex situations, laughing out loud and having though provoking conversations.

She listens well and people value her **progressive attitude and holistic approach to body & mind**. Beata is always full of energy to educate, inspire and guide.

WE SEE UNIQUENESS AND POTENTIAL.  
WE TRAIN PEOPLE.  
WE GROW BUSINESSES.

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WE SAID NO TO BOREDOM AND  
TYPICAL TRAININGS.

WE SAID YES TO ENGAGEMENT,  
EFFECTIVENESS AND ENERGY



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