

## RCS Discussion Questions for Elementary Age MKs/TCKs

Depending on the age, schooling experience (home schooling, boarding school, international school), cultural difference between where the student lived and the U.S.A. setting, time spent in the cross-cultural setting, age, temperament, parental orientation for the student's coming to/returning to the U.S.A. and the apparent reverse culture shock being experienced the following questions may be appropriate for discussion and encouragement:

**Questions to ask:** (Be sure they are appropriate for the individual.)

- Would you tell me about where you were living before you came here?
- What were some of your favorite things about where you were living?
- When you moved here, do you remember anything you left where you used to live?
- What are some of your deepest losses as a MK?
- What do you miss about living where you used to live?
- Can you describe a regular day in your life?
- What do you see as different here from where you used to live?
- Where is your favorite place to go in your host country?
- Do you have new friends here? May I be your friend?
- Have you seen things here which frighten you? If so, can you tell me about them?
- Where are you going to school? How is it like/different from where you used to be in school?
- Did you have "Sunday School" where you used to live? If so, how was it like or different from what we are doing here?
- How can I pray for you?

**Questions/comments to avoid:**

- Aren't you glad to be home?
- Do you remember...?
- How's (*insert host country*)?
- Have you made a million friends?
- Can you say something in (*insert name of language of the host country*)?
- Do you eat bugs?
- Have you had fun over there?
- Are you going to be a missionary when you grow up?
- Avoid comparisons between here and there.
- Avoid negative comparisons between here and there.

The following quote from Craig Storti's *The Art of Coming Home* may be helpful as you seek to be sensitive to the needs of MKs/TCKs:

The signs of a difficult reentry are the usual signs of insecurity among small children: clinging to parents, including hysterical behavior when parents go out..., the usual attention-getting behaviors, including fussiness, crying and eating problems; regressive behavior such as thumb sucking, asking for a bottle, bed-wetting; and other signs of stress, such as irritability, sleeping problems, toilet-training difficulties, and refusal to take naps (p. 114).

As you work with MKs/TCKs, remember a caring, committed, compassionate mentor can play an important role in adjusting and overcoming the shock of “coming home.” The MK/TCK may not see the U.S. as “home.” It may well be his/her “passport country,” but not “home!” In a very real sense “Home is where the heart is.” Moving is always disruptive and moving across cultures is always more disruptive than within one’s own culture. When moving across cultures, **everything** differs in some way and often in subtle unexpected ways (e.g. non-verbal communication, ways of perceiving, values...). Most of the time the troubling differences are unexpected. The key characteristics of an effective mentor include: empathy, compassion, respect and an eagerness to learn from the one being mentored.

While many resources are available to help understand and address MKs/TCKs, the following ones are among the most recommended:

Pollock, David C. and Ruth E. Van Renken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing up Among Worlds*. (2009). Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Storti, Craig, *The Art of Coming Home*. (2003). Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

<http://michelephoenix.com/mk-ministry/>

<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c56075.htm>

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=reverse+culture+shock](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=reverse+culture+shock) (Read some of the listings which have more than 1k views.)

(For additional resources please contact [Dr. E. J. Elliston](#) or [Donna Elliston](#).)