

Coming Home Gives Missionaries Culture Shock

Coming back to Germany after 14 years in Egypt, it took our family about two years to settle into our “home culture”. We had changed so much! A big part of us had become Egyptian, and Germany had changed as well.

At this point our three kids were ages 12, 10 and 7, and they did not find it easy to fit into German culture and lifestyle, either. They said things like: “Mom, can you imagine, I have kids in my class who have lived their whole life in the same house and their grandparents are living there as well!”

After being here for some months their conclusion about German children was: “They are aggressive, they use bad language and they are not interested in others!” But, they would always defend kids with darker skin.

Between 2007 and 2009, I went back to Egypt three times and took one of the children with me each time, to give them the opportunity to visit their old friends and see how life there has changed as well. I think for all of them this was good and brought some kind of closure.

Despite their German appearance, big parts of our kids’ hearts are and always will be Egyptian. Our oldest daughter, Angelika*, went with Operation Mobilization to Asia after finishing school. She spent a gap year there and loved it!

After a few weeks there she said to me, “Mom, I feel much more at home here than I do in Germany. People here really do understand me!” She never gets culture shock when leaving Germany, only when coming back.

Angelika is now studying to become a college teacher in English and religious education. She works in an international

café with foreign students and is always excited to meet new people.

Our second daughter, Annelie*, is the artist in the family and just finishing training to become a graphic designer. She is very outgoing and makes contact easily, so is looking forward to joining a short-term OM training team in South America.

Both girls would like eventually to live and work in their profession outside of Germany, perhaps with a non-government organization and definitely with a missionary lifestyle.

Annelie says, “I am blessed being an MK–Mission Kid. I have seen so much and gotten such a wide horizon. I know so many people in different countries around the world, and they are amazing. I have learnt so much from them! I grew up in such a way because God called my parents, and they obeyed and I am part of it. That is really special!

“The other side is that being here in Germany I often feel I don’t have long-standing roots anywhere. My friends are spread all over the world. Often the question comes up, where do I belong?

Sometimes when I think about my future I feel panic creeping in. Where do I fit in, where will my place be? Egypt is not home anymore and Germany is not really home either. And then I realize that my family is very important to me because they are the only thing in my life that is constant!

But having said all this, I would never, ever, want to change being an MK. Mission is definitely something I want to live and do!”

Markus*, our son, just started an apprenticeship to become an electronics technician. He is thinking about going to the ship *Logos Hope* when he is finished and use his skills on board for a while. Markus is probably the most business-minded person in our family. Who knows, maybe he will support his sisters one

day!

Ruth Van Reken of , the official online home for Third Culture Kids, explains that such children have spent a significant part of their developmental years outside their parents' culture. Cultural jet lag can be severe.

All too many children of missionaries end up rejecting missions, sometimes even their faith. Yet their struggles are often overlooked by churches who care for returning families. OM International alone has 1,160 children under 18.

Will you remember to pray for the unique challenges they face?

*Name changed

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