

HOW TO HELP MKS IN COLLEGE OR TRANSITIONING TO THE U.S.



OFFER EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- If possible, cultivate the relationship when they are young so you are in a position to help when they are older.
- Reintroduce yourself to MKs you haven't seen a few years, and give them permission to turn down public appearances at church.
- Model vulnerability and grace, showing MKs that they don't need to be perfect and God doesn't expect that of them either.
- Give them permission to grieve – and be available to listen and offer comfort.
- Listen!
 - Don't take it personally when they criticize the U.S. and constantly compare it unfavorably with overseas.
 - Don't assume you understand – and never say you do unless you are an MK (or TCK) yourself. Be careful about minimizing their experiences or pain.
 - Grieving takes time and shouldn't have a deadline. Keep listening.
 - Be alert for signs (verbal or non-verbal) of serious trouble (severe depression, suicidal thoughts, risky behavior, etc.).
- Pray for them!

OFFER PRACTICAL HELP

- Be a cultural mentor and/or help them find a peer mentor. Even though MKs look and sound American, they don't think or feel like an American on the inside.
- Offer them a “home away from home.” Invite them to be part of your family activities... then invite them again!
- Send notes/cards, online messages, care packages, etc. to remind them you are thinking of them and praying for them.
- Offer practical assistance with new things:
 - Learning to drive and getting a driver's license
 - Completing income tax or financial aid forms
 - Finding/getting to the doctor or dentist (and understanding their health insurance)
 - Storing their stuff from college during summer vacation
 - Getting around (transportation)
 - Finding summer accommodations
 - Learning about banking and financial management (e.g. opening a bank account, paying bills, applying for credit cards, understanding credit card fees/interest, etc.)
 - Buying winter clothes
 - Applying for jobs

How Churches Can Care for Missionary Kids

By Ali Jackson, MK Caregiver, ReachGlobal

“A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK’s life experiences, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.”

-Pollock and Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*

Cultural Traits of TCKs

Spiritual Traits of MKs

How Can the Church Help?

- MKs are highly mobile and say lots of goodbyes (and hellos)
- MKs usually visit a LOT of churches with their parents
- MKs value genuineness and deep conversation
- MKs have accumulated losses and grief
- MKs may feel pressured to be “perfect”
- MKs are unsettled and often don’t have a “home base”