



# Parenting Third Culture Kids (3CK)

A “Third Culture Kid” (3CK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her childhood and/or teenage years outside their “home” culture (that is, their parents’ culture). 3CK are raised in a neither/nor world – neither fully grounded in their “home” culture, nor fully grounded in the culture in which they were raised. Since these are the essential periods of identity development, 3CK form unique identities. Unlike other people, who identify clearly with the specific culture they were raised in, 3CK stand between two (or more) very different cultures; they feel pulled between different sets of values/customs, they can often see what other people don’t see, and sometimes they feel as if they don’t fit anywhere.

*Provided as a community service by PSI, Bangkok’s professional and experienced group of expatriate mental health professionals. PSI is located in a private and peaceful setting in the city center.*

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Every parent knows that there are enormous benefits to experiencing different cultures firsthand, such as an expanded world view. While this can be a source of strength, there may also be some problematic effects on children raised “between worlds.” These may include:

- Ψ Sense of “rootlessness” and restlessness
- Ψ Early maturity but also delayed/prolonged adolescence
- Ψ Unresolved grief
- Ψ Confused sense of belonging

What can parents of 3CKs do to maximize their cross-cultural parenting skills? When moving, consider building a “Raft” (for parents and children):

**R**econcile any interpersonal difficulties

**A**ffirm relationships that have been built and maintained (e.g. coworkers, friends, neighbors, etc.)

**F**arewells – to people, places, pets, and possessions. Allow children to mourn their losses.

**T**hink about your destination – be prepared and prepare children for the transition!

Also, set aside special family times and make family traditions; build ties with the community; use reference guides written by other expatriate families (such as ANZWG’s Bangkok Guide). Explore, tour, and become involved in the surroundings of the host country. For parents (or relatives) of teens or young adult 3CK, listen and try to understand any feedback about their experience.

For more information, get this book: Pollock, D. C., & Van Reken, R. E. (1999, 2001). *Third culture kids: The experience of growing up between worlds*. Yarmouth, MN: Intercultural Press. ISBN: 1-85788-295-4.