

Seven Secrets to Success Abroad

- How to Survive and Thrive in a Foreign Land -



FORGET everything you thought you knew:
The very behavior that made you successful in the West
can ruin your chances in the Non-Western World

Contents

The contents of this book reflect the author's successful experience living abroad since 1989 in Botswana, Korea, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.



The main points of the chapters reflect observations of what made his life and those of other expatriates abroad successful and what lead many other expatriates to failure and to return to their home country with a bad taste in their mouth, often with no idea at all of the pivotal part they played in their own downfall.

Even a simple life abroad can be extremely rewarding spiritually, educationally and even financially. The author was not a corporate executive. He started as a Peace Corps Volunteer and then worked his way around Asia teaching English, primarily at the university level and as a teacher-trainer.

It is the overwhelmingly positive experience of the last 20+ years that has lead him to write this book and share the secrets of success abroad.

The secrets are simple, but not simplistic.

Chapter	Pages	Title
Introduction	3	The #1 Mistake Expatriate Wannabes Make
1	5-8	Attitude and the Valued Western Trait that can Spell Disaster in the non-Western World
2	9	What you Need to Know about Yourself
3	10-11	12 Super Skills of People who Succeed Abroad
4	12-14	When "Yes" equals "No"
5	15-16	"First Impressions are EVERYTHING"
6	17-18	Dealing Successfully with Culture Shock
7	19-21	Ten Key Words for Creating Success Abroad
Resources	22	Where to Learn More

"Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true." -- Ralph Waldo Emerson

#1 Most Common Mistake of Newbie and Wannabe Expatriates



One of the biggest mistakes people make in their lives is to put off, put off, put off - until later - until they meet some false level of criteria - before they act and do what is needed to get what they really want from life.

It is a simple thing - okay maybe not super simple - to land yourself a decent job abroad and to get yourself living in a country where you can live reasonably well for 1/2, 1/3, 1/4 or even less of what you think it costs you to live well where you are now. Where you can often save money even on a very modest wage.

And - you are seeing and traveling and experiencing the real world out there - not just the shopping malls, SUV payments, under-water mortgages and other things that can make life in the Western world seem, well . . . a bit plastic at times.

There is an ease of remaining in your home country in that it is nice and safe and that makes it easy to blame others, or the economy or whatever for your lack of progress in getting what you want out of life.

And there are plenty of people there to naysay and put you back on the course to dull mediocrity and a sad dull boring life . . . just like theirs.

They don't want you to break the mold, it would only disturb their own resignation to their paths.

Come on . . . Get with it!

Don't set an artificially high goal for yourself. For many of us out here, one job lead to the next, to the next, to the next. The author of this eBook is a former Peace Corps Volunteer who has been living overseas since 1989. You don't have to land the perfect job the very first time. Jump in, get your feet wet.

All it really takes is the decision to get going. And the decision to live a dream that maybe you thought you could never attain.

Do it. Do it now.

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." -- Mark Twain

Keys to your New Life and Success Abroad follow . . .



Chapter 1

It's all about Attitude

**AND . . .
a valued trait of Western
behavior that can cripple
your chances in the non-
Western world.**

But first – a personal story to illustrate
a point:

Someone on one of the Lonely Planet discussion groups a while back asked about Korea as a place to teach English. She had heard bad things about Korea.

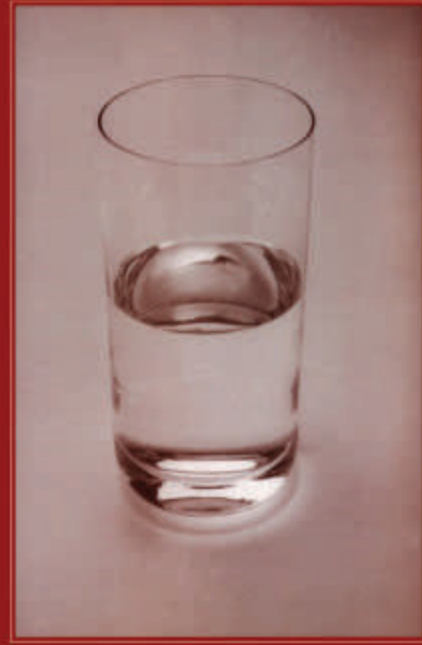
I wrote a response and related how my first nine months in Korea had gone. Let me tell you the story: Know though that it is not typical of first jobs in Korea.

In those first months I lived in eight different places. Literally from a stairwell closet to a housesit where I wasn't to touch or use ANYTHING - to a nice house overlooking the sea - but with no water to flush the toilet . . .

Also in those first months, my contract was cancelled by my initial employer who decided to get out of the English teaching business (it was a popular Japanese language school).

Following that I moved from Busan to Daejon for a short-term job where my employer routinely shorted my wages. All the while my girlfriend (later to be my wife) was having similar problems and her employer wasn't paying her at all after the first few months.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE



It changes everything.

What a lousy disaster! And this was back in 1992-3 when people actually paid recruiters for placements! Yes - we paid for those lousy jobs and all those problems! Aaaaayyyyyeeee!

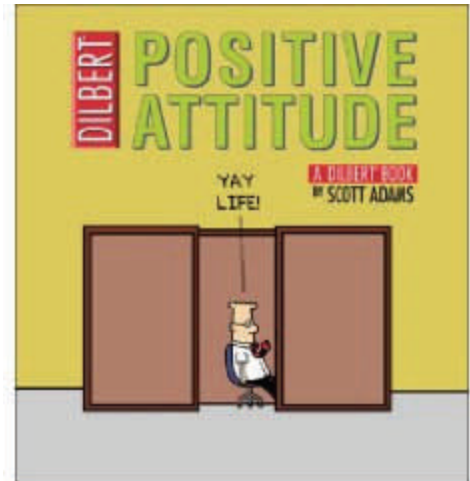
Some people would say, "That's the Korea I know!"

Was it all bad?

No!

I hope I've not convinced you to give up on Korea - because the good part of the story follows . . .

Well, that short-term job in Daejeon converted over to a nice college job back in Busan. The recruiter wanted more money to bail me out of the situation they had put me! I paid. What?!



WHY?!

Because they found me a job with twenty weeks paid vacation per year and a four-day work week. And only twelve hours of classes per week. You read that right - Yeah, that is the big two oh (20) paid vacation weeks (not days!).

So - in the midst of all those troubles I went from one week paid vacation to - for literally the same wages - to almost a half year off paid and literally a part-time job.

This story is the beginning of a long personally and financially rewarding career in EFL/TEFL. From 1992 until 2007 when I "retired".

I KNOW my RIGHTS!

Now . . . in the midst of all that, I could have demanded my "rights" - gotten overly assertive as most Westerners do in such situations, had a fit and quit and gone back to America - the whole thing a HUGE FAILURE and mistake. "Grumble grumble, Korea s*cks!"

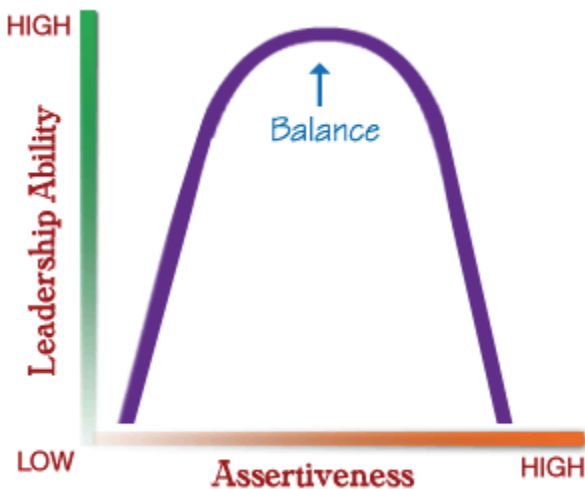
But I didn't.

I had the previous good fortune of two years in Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer and had gotten some excellent cross-cultural training. I waited, watched and let things play out.

If not for those two first bad jobs - I may have never made the jump to teaching at colleges and universities with long paid vacations. BTW, my wife made the same transition and we taught at colleges and universities in Korea, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and Thailand for the next twelve years.

And we have had a GREAT life with lots of travel and even financial security. Thank you, Korea!

I KNOW my RIGHTS!



Back to that (my rights) . . . That assertive behavior so valued in the West that you are considered nothing if you don't, "Stand up for yourself" — "Call a spade a spade" — "Get what is yours" and "Show them what you are made of".

Now . . . you can decide what path worked best for me in this circumstance. Getting all assertive or letting things play out a bit?

Back to the lady on the Lonely Planet discussion group. In the posting I called those initial months a positive experience.

What!? Why?

Because after all that - there was truly nothing an employer could throw at me that would shake me up. I would, after that time, just take a deep breath and see where it all went. And it almost always went to wonderful places.

The lady on Lonely Planet said she saw it as a very negative experience.

But . . . but . . . how could it be negative when it opened the door to more than a decade of great jobs, travel, savings and a wonderful life?

Back to Attitude

I hope you can see what I am saying here. You decide - you really do decide what works in your life and what doesn't. And you make it work - or not. I'm not saying to call a pig a rose. Do be aware of what is going on in your life - but do choose your battles carefully. Let things play out a bit before bailing out or blowing up.

Be patient, learn a few cultural skills and you will find a whole new world out here, just waiting for you. And while you are making a success of it all, you will meet and see others fall by the wayside as they exercise their "rights" and turn their lives into negative nightmares. You will meet them and they will always be spewing their negative attitudes and ideas, hoping to poison you as well. Don't let them do it.

Don't be one of them. Come on board for a great new life abroad. It really is possible. But just like with jobs "back home", you will meet bad bosses, bad companies, bad situations. And, just like "back home" you can overcome them with the right attitude.

Come on board. A life you can't even imagine awaits you.

Nike says, "Just do it" - and they are so right.

As you cruise through this ebook you will find other pages that will help you learn how to deal with cultural issues. Please do read them and take them to heart.

They can make all the difference in your new life. I promise.

PS: A few years ago I went back to Korea for three more years and had a GREAT and financially rewarding time. It was a wonderful close out to my EFL career only a few years before retiring.

A negative
experience?

Noooooooooo!



Know Yourself!

The Role of Anxiety in Transitioning Abroad

It is common and even probably a good thing to have sleepless nights and second thoughts about taking a job overseas, moving overseas, changing your life dramatically.

Though the author has lived in the USA, Botswana, Korea, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and Thailand - all of them for at least 18 months and several for five years or more - even he still gets nervous and worries about changing jobs and changing countries. It is normal.

The role of anxiety in life transitions are to let you know that you are stretching the cocoon of your perhaps already too comfortable existence.

If you never felt nervous or if you were never concerned about anything, that means you are never challenging yourself. It means you are never stretching the boundaries of a life that you want to change (and that's exactly why you are reading this eBook). It means you are not bringing change to your life. It probably also means you are bored with your life.

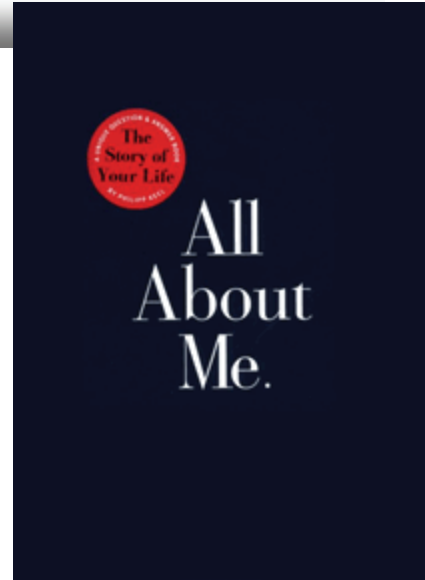
You should be more worried if you are not feeling anxiety! That means no change, no improvement, no growth, no nothing.

Is that what you really want?

It is not uncommon for people to accept jobs abroad and due to their anxiety bail out before even leaving for the job. Or even going overseas and bailing on their job in the first week or two. Much of this comes about due to their misunderstanding of the anxiety they are feeling due to the changes in their life.

It is *critically important* that you look at the anxiety that such a transition brings and understand it for what it is: A sign that you are growing and challenging yourself in new ways.

That's a good thing!



LEARN these 12 Super Skills of the People who Succeed Abroad



Following are the author's observations based on living abroad for over 20 years. People who succeed abroad either have or quickly learn the following Life Skills:

1. They have reasonable expectations about their new setting/situation and what it can and cannot provide for them.
2. They don't expect to start at the top.
They expect to move up.
3. They understand that their new country is not like their home country - solutions to problems that work at home often don't work overseas. They realize they will have to LEARN new skills, some of them quite basic.
That's half the fun of living abroad!
4. They realize that problems they had at home will probably also exist overseas. Difficulties with relationships, bad habits and other issues are part of YOU.
They don't go away just because you move somewhere else.
5. They know they will have good days and bad days - just like back home.
It is easy to blame new problems on the new job, the new country, new coworkers. Life is always presenting good and bad days, you just have to work to make the best of them. Playing the Blame Game isn't useful or productive.
6. They know they may experience good bosses, bad bosses, good jobs and bad jobs - just like back home.
Why would being somewhere else be any different?
7. They are flexible people who can roll with surprises and "punches". Life abroad will teach you to be more flexible and adaptive.
Those are critical skills.

8. They are willing to work under different cultural expectations, willing to follow different cultural work rules.

They don't feel that their native culture is always the best and if they do have that opinion, they don't feel the need to express it.

9. They are resilient and can bounce back from a bad situation.

A critical skill no matter where you live!

10. They are not generally moody or depressed.

People with emotional and personality problems do not usually last very long abroad. The challenges of living overseas tend to magnify their problems and they typically self-destruct rather quickly.

11. They view their success as a personal challenge.

They expect that they will meet obstacles to their success, just as they would "back home" and strive to overcome them.

12. They spent a considerable amount of time researching their move before they moved.

They studied and learned about cultural differences and even a few language basics such as "Please" and "Thank you".



When "Yes" equals "No" or . . . How you can get very confused!



How people behave and respond outside your native culture will often be very different from what you are familiar with and sometimes even counter-intuitive to what you thought would happen.

Western-style assertiveness is not so common in the rest of the world (as we discussed in Chapter One). Another personal story to illustrate, if I may:

In the summer of 1993, I was teaching at a university's summer program, socking away a little extra cash while on paid vacation from the college where I was working during the regular school year. The weather was very hot and sweaty - and the classrooms had no air conditioning. And I mean HOT and SWEATY - we were soaking with sweat.

A Coffee Shop

The students suggested that we have our class across the street in an air-conditioned coffee shop - a great idea! And something I had seen done at a few other schools. There were only about eight students in the class, so we would easily fit in a big corner booth. I asked the professor in charge of the program if it was okay - and he said, "Yes."

A few minutes later he said, "So you are not having class today?" I replied, "Of course we are, we are going to meet in the coffee shop - as the students requested. That's okay, isn't it?" He said, "Yes."

A few minutes later he - again - said, "So you are not having class today?"

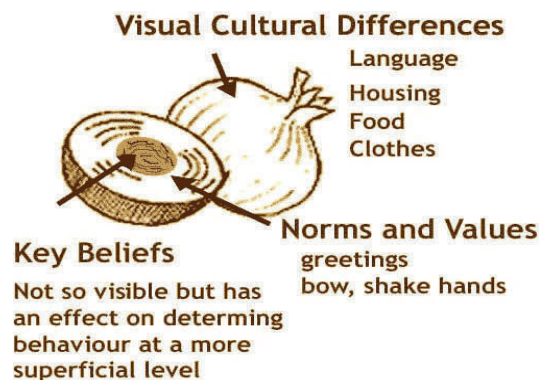
Well . . . we went through this cycle several times before I got a bit upset and told the supervisor, "If you don't want us to meet at the coffee shop - just say 'No!'"

Needless to say, everyone was upset. But, it didn't need to be that way - I really should have picked up on it the first time or at least the second time the supervisor asked if I was not having class.

Get it?

Many cultures are not as direct as our own. You'll need to pay attention and listen for underlying content - all the time!

You can make your host country coworkers and supervisors very uncomfortable if you make them confront you, or if you become confrontational. It can really stress your relationships and sour your work situation.
Be careful, listen, interpret.



If you really don't understand a situation . . .

Ask your supervisor about it in the context of a culture question.

You can say, "I am a bit confused here. In my culture my boss would say '[fill in the blank]' - are you wanting me to '[do or not do something]?' Please help me understand."

This kind of a statement takes the heat off the situation - and saves "face" for everyone involved. You can even have a good laugh about it - instead of everyone being upset.

Develop a little finesse in dealing with cross-cultural communications and your life will go much smoother overseas! It's all part of learning to be a skilled expatriate.





Appearances are Important

In Western culture, we tend to pride ourselves on the "rebel billionaire" look, and we know that dress and appearance really don't measure the quality of our character or the level of our skills. But . . . in many other cultures - appearance is paramount.

A Cultural Lesson

As an example - in Korea (and many other cultures) a common saying is, "The first impression is everything." Appearances are critical in many cultures.

Notice the saying does not say, "First impressions are important" - they say they are "everything"!

When the author lived in Africa, so important was the idea of appearance and initial impressions that he would sometimes be surprised to see a man come out of a mud hut wearing a three-piece suit! Or a woman leaving a tin shack in a fashionable party dress and high heels!

Even the poorest people knew just how important it was to present themselves well.

Dress nicely and professionally and groom yourself well. It's not difficult and will enhance your opportunities. Our Western ideals are often not theirs. Play along, do what is required. Wear the slacks and tie. It is the gateway to so much more.

Tattoos, Piercings and More

Keep them out of sight. In some cultures, tattoos are symbols of the *yakuza* or *mafia* (criminal elements). Yes, in some non-Western cultures some local people will have tattoos. But they generally aren't professionals. Surfers, laborers, yes - but as a professional and as a foreigner - in most cultures/countries you can expect to be closely observed, judged, commented on - and just generally the butt of gossip.

Get used to it, understand it, and deal with it appropriately.

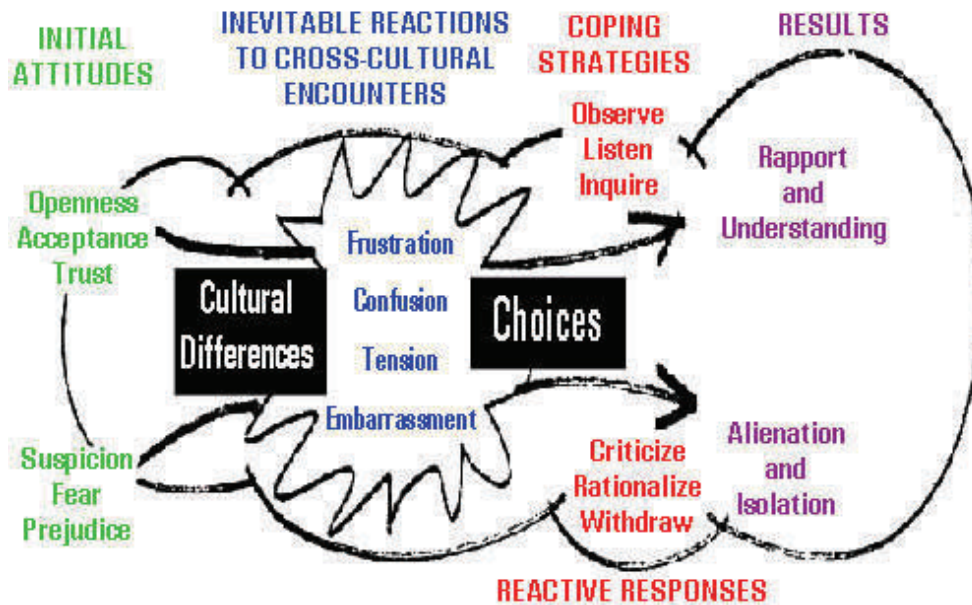
For many people showing such things off is a matter of pride and principle. They feel they should be accepted for who and what they are.

But other cultures don't often have the same idea or ideal. In their country, they would like you to conform to their cultural standards. In many countries you will limit your career and opportunities if you are not discreet with this.

As written previously: Play along, it is the gateway to so much more. View cultural differences as a fun and challenging game to play, not as something that you must challenge and overcome. Because you won't and can't win.



Dealing Successfully with Culture Shock



Will you get it? And if you do, what can you do about it?

Yes, you'll probably get it.

But "shock" is a somewhat of an overstatement. A bit of drama perhaps.

Here's how it works:

You can expect to feel euphoric (I finally made it!),

Angry (Why can't I make things work, like back home!),

Depressed and disappointed (Everything isn't exactly like I wanted/dreamed/expected it to be!),

And isolated (I don't really know anyone here).

It is okay, all of this is normal.

After all this is a very big time in your life and of course you will have some strong feelings about it!

Natural Reactions

These emotional reactions are all natural responses to the situation you will find yourself in overseas.

How to deal with it?

Get busy - personal projects, work, travel, making friends, even volunteering. But, also take a little time and just recognize the feelings for what they are.

One of the best articles ever about dealing with Culture Shock is at:

Culture Shock, at www.About.com

Don't forget that you can have problems with your job, boss, landlord, and friends back home too. Don't blame it all on your host country!

Know that the effects of culture shock diminish as you learn to have more realistic expectations and as you just naturally learn how to deal with a new culture.

Surviving Uncertainty

Part of the issue with culture shock is also the uncertainty of your new situation - how it is going to evolve and your ability to manage it - and your general feelings about it.

Follow the same course of treatment for culture shock!

Quit moping around the house and get busy!

Review the chart on the previous page for a better understanding of what goes on and your choices, try your best to stay on the top half of the chart.





The Top Ten Words to Internalize to Enjoy the Expatriate Lifestyle

Thrive don't just survive! The Expat lifestyle will be what you make it. Keep these ten words close to your heart and mind and you will enjoy the ride!

1. Open mind

Enjoy the differences. View the new culture from the angle of “what can I learn”. Remember that there is always an explanation for why a culture or person behaves the way they do. Seek with an open mind and you will realize there is an alternative to every viewpoint. Oh and yours isn't always the right one, it's just yours.

2. Patience

“This too shall pass” is one of my favorite mantras since living abroad. New language, new systems, actions or attitudes different from your own, timeframes that may conflict with yours and rules that you often want to argue. These are common experiences for someone in a new country. Hold onto your patience and remember, “this too shall pass”.

3. Humor

Laugh! Every chance you get. Is there anything worth getting that upset or serious about? Yes, a few things. But overall, life is funny. Find the humor in each day and each crazy experience. Share them with friends and family back home.



Laughter heals, laughter mends and it is much better than focusing on a negative situation. Turn it around. Every situation has a chance for humor.

4. Adventure

Look at the opportunities to explore and challenge yourself and your family. See new things, taste new foods, hear new languages or accents. Live this adventure – use the opportunities presented to you to fully experience all that is ahead of you. Every country, every culture has its own adventure – find it!

5. Growth

One of the best ways to find out what you can't and can handle is to move to a foreign country where you don't speak the language or know the customs. Here is a chance to expand your awareness of yourself and others. Use this chance to overcome fears and rethink your values and goals.

6. Boundaries

Be certain of who you are and what you believe in. Remain flexible within the culture and situation but also remain true to yourself. Know your limits and you will prevent unnecessary emotional struggles when your limits are challenged by culture shock or the various issues that come up while abroad.

7. Acceptance

You and I are different. Within each state or province, we are different. Within our own families we are different. So, of course we are different from those who were raised in a society different from our own. Tolerance is often masked by a negative emotion. I encourage you to take it a step further and accept the differences and not try to compare or change them.

8. Curiosity

Try the local foods. Put on some of the clothes. Take the time to get to know your neighbors if possible. Learn the language or at least enough to do daily activities. View the new culture with a child's eyes. Your whole experience will be richer and more rewarding if you remain curious to all that is around you.

9. Courage

Going to a new country is not for the "weak at heart". You can be challenged daily with opposing views, cultural norms and even isolation and loneliness.

Your normal support system is often an ocean away and the time zones seem huge when you want to call someone back home for a simple chat. Knowing up front that you are courageous for taking the assignment or choosing to go abroad can be a powerful reminder when you feel down. How many of your friends and family would ever consider "up and moving" to another country? Let's face it. Somewhere inside you, you have courage.

10. Attitude

This one is so simple. You have two choices here. Positive or Negative. Avoid the Expats that fall into the latter category. Their pessimism is like a virus that spreads and darkens all your thoughts and experiences. Sure there are tough times when living abroad. Either way you're going to get through them. Which way do you wish to spend the time while you're doing it? Happy and enjoying the ride or griping and bitching while being dragged the whole way?

Taken from: www.coachingforexpats.com

- Jafa Coaching & Consulting
- Julia Ferguson Andriessen





Internet Resources for Learning More about Life Abroad

[TEFLeBooks.com](#) :: Online Digital Resources for Teaching English Abroad -
Learn, Earn, Play!

[TEFL Jobs China](#) :: FREE Job Placement in China - Jobs Teaching English at
Government Colleges and Universities.

[ExpatGuy.com](#) :: A 64 page FAQ about Life Overseas - What's it all about?

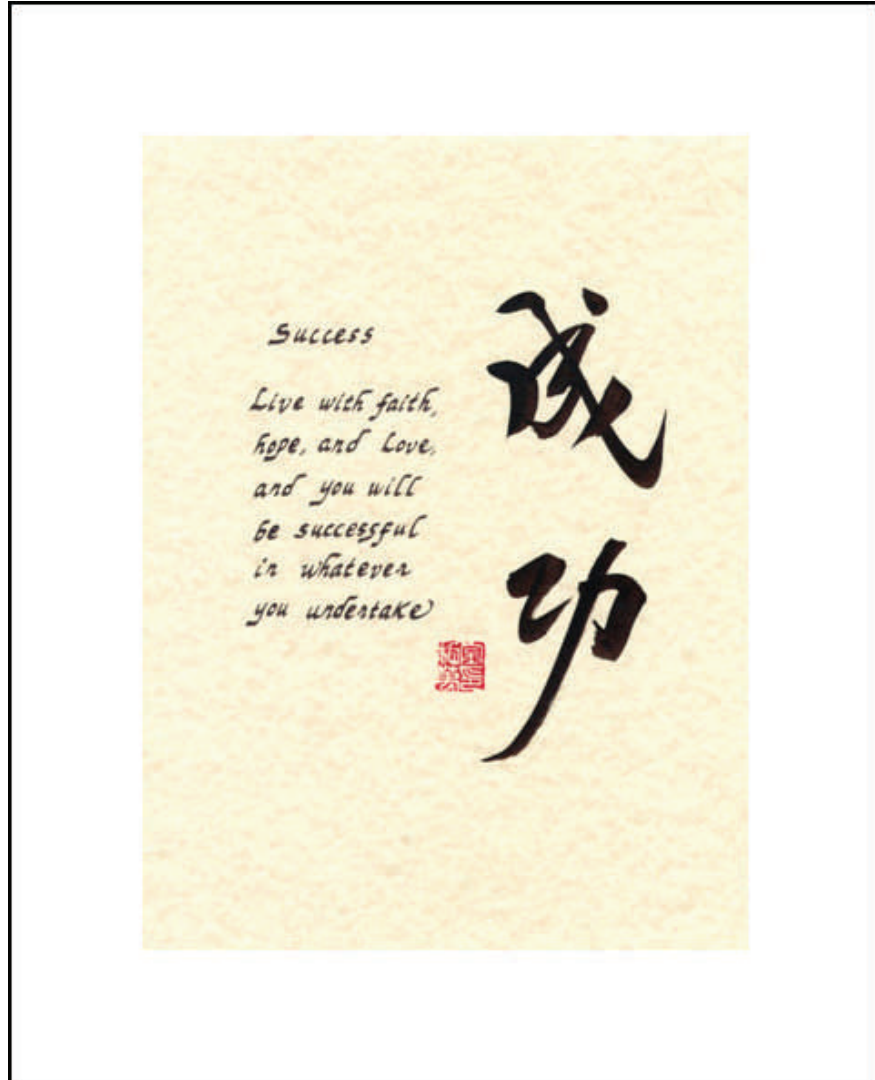
[TEFLdaddy.com](#) :: A 100+ Page FAQ about Teaching English Abroad - Is it for
you?

[ESLjobsNow.com](#) :: Jobs Teaching English Around the World - Where would
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