

# Expat Express E-Contact™

## Welcome to Expat Express E-Contact

**Our mission:** To support you during your Expat journey so you achieve life balance, joy in the adventure and personal satisfaction during your time abroad. You can also send in a question for our Expat Coach to be answered in upcoming issues. (Check the Q & A section to find out how to submit your questions and benefit from free coaching within this newsletter)

Each issue will contain tips, tools and resources as well as an interview with a fellow Expat - either female or male.

In order for us to provide you with the information you need, please take a moment to tell us what you would like to read here and if you would like to be a featured interviewee for an upcoming issue. Contact us: [coachjulia@coachingforexpats.com](mailto:coachjulia@coachingforexpats.com)

### This month's issue:

- ❖ Interview with Karla Thomas Solomon
- ❖ Coaching Exercise Safety Inventory



### In each issue:

- ❖ Tips & Resources
- ❖ Q & A
- ❖ Theme Word
- ❖ New Subscriber Info
- ❖ About the authors
- ❖ Coaching for Expats
- ❖ Jafa News/Offerers

### Hot Tips and Resources

This month's theme is safety while living abroad.

1. Learn how to get help in the local language. Write down the words and phone numbers for Police, Fire, and your doctor's office and post at all phones in your home. Learn the emergency number to dial if available. In the US - 911 in the Netherlands - 112. What is it in your country?
2. Familiarize yourself with the emergency resources in your area - find your local hospital, Red Cross, fire and police stations.
3. Update all your contact details for family and friends so you have it if an emergency arises. Also provide your info to them.
4. Register yourself with your countries Embassy or Consulate so they can assist you in the case of a natural disaster.
5. Find out which TV channel or Radio Station provides emergency and/or disaster information.
6. Create a plan for your family - where will you go, who will you call to check in, where do you keep emergency resources (cash)
7. Maintain a central location with important papers in a folder or box that can be easily accessed by any family member to take with them upon evacuation or in a hurry.

### How to Subscribe

If you wish to receive Expat Express once a month, please subscribe at the link below.

<http://www.juliaferguson.com/cgi-bin/mojo.cgi>

Please help us reach Expats around the globe and forward this Ezine with copyright info intact to your contacts who you think would benefit. We thank you for your support!

### Featured Interview: Karla Thomas Solomon - Moscow, Russia

Karla is a Textile Artist from the US who is living with her husband and 2 children in Russia for the past 3 years. She shares with us information about being an art quilter, a Foreign Service wife and the light side of being an Expat.

#### **How did you become an Expat?**

My husband finished his PhD in Russian literature in 1997. There were only a few jobs in academia with two hundred applicants each. On a whim he took the Foreign Service exam and passed. This was always his dream job. I did not finish my PhD (same field), and left just as I finished massage therapy school.

#### **Is this your first time living abroad?**

We spent almost two years in South Korea before coming here. I first came to the Soviet Union as a student for 8 weeks in 1986, and then returned in 1989-90 for 10 months working for a US Government traveling exhibit.

#### **What do you wish you had done to prepare yourself before leaving the US?**

We had two months notice before we left for Korea, and I think we were pretty well-prepared. Its different coming with the government; our housing is assigned, so we don't have to set that up, there is a support structure somewhat in place. I wish I had had time for language lessons, (Karla spoke Russian but not Korean) but otherwise I felt fairly well-prepared. Oh, clothes and shoes - that is a chronic problem for me. I always wish I had more or different.

#### **Anything you wish you had brought with you?**

Definitely my art supplies. I brought some but was trying to travel light, which was a mistake. Don't travel light with the things that make you happy and give you pleasant ways to pass time. Nice sheets and good pillows are also important.

#### **What is the best experience you have had in Russia?**

Three families went to Sergiev Posad, about an hour from here, for a day of sleigh riding through the woods, feasting on Russian pancakes and other dishes, and being beaten with branches and rubbed with honey in the Russian sauna. There was a lot of champagne and vodka involved, and everyone had a great time.

#### **How do you stay safe as an Expat living abroad?**

I keep my hand on my purse in the metro and crowds. I don't carry more than \$200 without a good purpose and only change money where I feel comfortable. I keep alert in public and look like I know where I'm going, even if I'm not sure. I don't volunteer info about myself without good cause or enough context to feel it's safe. (If a shop clerk asks why I'm in Moscow, I just say my husband works here; I don't say he's with the embassy.) I don't reply to people on the street I don't know who speak to me in English. (A throwaway line in a rare language is useful to avoid souvenir hawkers but that's not a safety issue!). I speak Russian, so it's easier for me to know what's going on around me.

**Featured Interview: Karla Thomas Solomon - Moscow, Russia**

**How are your girls doing living in Russia?**

Our daughters are 8 and 4. The younger one has always lived overseas. The older one hates having to part with friends and make new ones, but seems to be okay at doing so. Overall she has adapted well. She goes to the Anglo-American school.

**Any groups or clubs you have joined to help build a social circle?**

My interest in quilting is a good way to connect to people. In Seoul I belonged to a book club.

**Can you get your quilting supplies in Russia?**

Not really. I did buy a nice German sewing machine at a good price, and I can get Gutermann thread for a good price. Other notions are available on a catch as catch can basis. Fabric is of lesser quality and the selection is small, and it's not easy to find. One shelf of one quilting store in the States has more selection than I can find here.

**What are you doing for fun in Russia?**

We walk in the city and look for new cafes to try. In the winter it's beautiful to walk through the dark snowy streets. Occasionally we go to movies (tickets cost about the same, but popcorn and sodas are much cheaper!) and the theater, ballet and opera in Moscow are outstanding and very reasonably priced. Gorky Park is popular with the kids for amusement rides. Last week I went to the Tretiakov Gallery.

**What has helped you acculturate in Russia?**

The internet. It's amazing the information you can find - newspapers, Expat boards. I think the internet and email have changed Expat life for the better. Home doesn't seem so far away, information and news is easier to come by.

**What's tough about being a Foreign Service wife?**

You're an unpaid representative of your country. You move frequently, and when you don't leave, your friends will. Your husband can never take time off for fun, or the world will slide into nuclear war (slight exaggeration, but that seems to be the argument at times). Your kids need extra attention to survive all the transitions. It's hard to find fulfilling paid employment. Housing in DC is expensive. At receptions/dinner parties nobody ever asks what you do, especially if you don't work.

**How has living in a foreign country changed you?**

It's made me both more and less tolerant and patient. I've changed domestic habits when I've found new things I like. I go further a field for my answers when I question things and wonder why I do things a certain way. I am more appreciative and patriotic about the US, though there are many reasons I'm glad to be living abroad while my kids are growing up.

**What is one word to describe your Expat experience?**

Exhillirausting!

Thanks Karla for your honesty and insight - Russian sleigh rides and saunas sound fun!

**Q and A submitted by subscribers:**

**Q.** I feel vulnerable when I am in the city in the evenings on my own. I have to park my car in an unsupervised underground car park and often have to walk back to the car on my own. I am scared that if I need assistance in an emergency, I will panic, my Dutch will desert me and I will be unable to get help. What are your suggestions for dealing with this situation when you are living outside your own country? *Sheryl Buckland, British Expat in the Netherlands*

**A.** Sheryl, I take certain precautions when entering a car park. I always have my keys ready; I also keep the longest and heaviest key inserted between my index and middle finger. If someone comes at me, I have been taught how to jab it at the eye. That said, I have taken basic self defense and safety classes and they helped increase my confidence and understanding of what to do in a variety of situations. *Would taking such a course help you to be better prepared and more at ease?* Perhaps the British Consulate offers courses or can refer you to someone who teaches a course in English in your area in the Netherlands.

I learned in a psychology course that some people don't respond to the word "help" but most people respond to the word "fire". Ultimately the goal here is to scare off the attacker and draw attention to your situation. *What words can you learn in Dutch that you feel comfortable you won't forget?* And if you had to speak in English, would some people be able to help you or guide you to the proper authorities? The bigger question I want to ask you. *Are you afraid the locals won't help you regardless of which language you speak?* If your answer is yes, take time to evaluate if that is your fear talking or the truth. If it is the truth, then I encourage you to develop a back up plan for you and your family when out in public.

**Q.** As the anniversary of Sept 11 approaches, I am sure there will be some kind of memorial service. I don't know if it will be at the US consulate. As much as I am needing the solidarity of other Americans, I question whether it is safe to expose ourselves as Americans on that day. Is it a question of cowardice or courage? Standing up for our country or being safe as a family? *Ritta Yee, US Expat in Spain*

**A.** Ritta, I agree this is a tough one. Showing unity publicly may send a positive message worldwide and doing so can also make us a target. I will be in Canada on September 11<sup>th</sup> and am curious if I will react like I did when I was in Holland. I was both nervous being at the US Consulate in Amsterdam right after the 11<sup>th</sup> last year and also proud to be there and know others were showing support. I do believe safety and courage can go hand in hand. *How would "safe courage" look like for you? Is it different if you're alone vs. with your child or husband? How do you want to remember September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002 in the future? What level or form of participation meets your needs to show solidarity while keeping your family safe in Spain?*

## Expat Express E-Contact

### How to submit a question:

1. Email your question to Expat Express (EE) - [expatexpress@juliaferguson.com](mailto:expatexpress@juliaferguson.com)
2. Please include your first name, passport country and country where you reside.
3. I will not be responding to all questions submitted to Expat Express. I may choose to use a question for a future EE, in which case I will notify the submitter.
4. I may contact you for further clarification of a question if necessary.

September: Safety while living abroad    October: Money Matters When You Move

### Coaching Exercise: Safety Inventory

Things that unnerve/frighten/concern me in this country:

Issue

Possible Solution

Getting lost alone

Cell phone/Hard copy of phone numbers in wallet

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Discuss concerns with your family and/or Expat friends. Share resources and ideas on how you can help each other in case of a crisis or disaster. Knowing we have taken these steps can go along way in easing our mind. If you are a member of a International club - suggest a future meeting covers self defense - often the local police authorities will be able to provide a speaker on safety as well.

### Monthly Theme Word

Each month I meditate on the Ezine theme with my Angel cards spread out in front of me. Then I simply draw a card. Have fun with this word - I know I am always amazed at how it connects to the theme and provides me new insight and focus. What does it bring out for you?

*Sisterhood/Brotherhood*

## Expat Express E-Contact

### **New Subscriber Information to EEE:**

This monthly Ezine is a free service provided by Jafa to increase your exposure to coaching and provide a forum in which you can ask questions and work on a monthly exercise to increase your learning and personal insight.

#### **Exercise and Theme Word:**

The exercise provided may be related to the questions or stand alone. The theme word for the month is drawn from Angel Cards and can be used by you in which ever way you choose. Some ideas could be to keep the word in your mind to explore more within your own environment, to journal about or to evaluate its importance to your life or personality.

At the end of each EEE I include Jafa news or offers. However, my main purpose for providing the Ezine is to offer an additional service to my clients, the Expat community and those interested in coaching and self-achievement. The main focus is on my Expat subscribers; however anyone may participate as much of the issues cross over to mainstream society and culture. If you know someone who may enjoy receiving EEE, please forward them an issue.

**Jafa Life Coaching Services:** I utilize my life experiences, education and cross cultural information to combine a unique approach to coaching women and men who want additional support on their "life team". I work with my clients to help them find meaningful work, define life goals, brainstorm and clarify work and personal issues, support them through immigration transitions and cross cultural relationship challenges.

Coaching is done via phone, email or in person. I suggest people work with the coach best suited for them and not which coach is closest. If you would like to benefit from the value of coaching, contact me to see if we are a good match and experience some one on one coaching in a free consultation. You can read more at my website: [www.coachingforexpats.com](http://www.coachingforexpats.com)

**About the Authors:** Julia Ann Ferguson Andriessen and Maarten Andriessen met online in early 1997. Julia was born in 1964 and Maarten in 1974. Julia was adopted and raised in the USA by Canadian Immigrants and Maarten was born and raised in the Netherlands. Their love of travel, culinary delights, helping others, history and computers created a strong bond. Julia moved to the Netherlands in April, 1998 and they married there in November, 1999. They relocated to Southern California in April, 2002 for Maarten to experience US culture first hand. While in the Netherlands they created a dinner group and International Mixer to support Love Immigrants and Expats and continue to provide support through this Ezine and [Friends Across Cultures](#) and [Women with Foreign Partners](#).

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## Expat Express E-Contact

### JAFa Business News:

Fall launch for [New You Now!](#)

Every New Years people make resolutions with good intentions. Whims and Wishes may keep them motivated for a few days or weeks but often by February the resolution resolve has dwindled.

The [New You Now](#) program is a 3 month coaching package that helps you identify your 2003 goals and resolutions now so you can work on them without the additional stress and chaos surrounding the New Year.

We work together in October, November and December 2002 so by January 1, 2003 your resolutions are no longer a wish but a part of your lifestyle.

#### Program includes:

One hour intake - to define goals and identify how you want to be supported


Two 30 minute coaching sessions each month coaching your progress

Weekly email support and fieldwork/homework based on goals.

Program Fee: \$250/month which includes the one hour intake

NOTE: Intakes will be scheduled from September 18<sup>th</sup> thru October 4<sup>th</sup>.

For information on all Julia's coaching programs and packages check out her site at [www.juliaferguson.com/packages.html](http://www.juliaferguson.com/packages.html)



*Julia will be attending a Ferguson Family reunion and wedding in Canada from September 4 through September 14<sup>th</sup>. She will be unavailable during that time. Email and phone calls will be answered when she returns. Thank you!*