

Love Immigrants™ The Ezine

Welcome to Love Immigrants - The Ezine

Our mission: To bring you a wealth of information that helps your Love Immigrant relationship and you specifically find support, encouragement and continued resources so you and your partner can build your future together with love, honesty and hope.

Each issue will contain tips, tools and advice as well as an interview with a fellow love immigrant - 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 here coachjulia@loveimmigrants.com

This month's issue:

- ❖ Interview with Rebecca Gjendem
- ❖ The Comparison Trap: Exercise on Self Esteem in other Cultures



In each issue:

- ❖ Hot Tips and Resources
- ❖ Love Quote
- ❖ AWOS - Info on American Women Over Seas Domestic Violence Fund
- ❖ About the authors
- ❖ Personal Coaching for Love Immigrants

Hot Tips and Resources

Some key websites for those anywhere in the immigration process: Some are country specific and some are not:

US Immigration and Naturalization Service

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/>

United Kingdom HomeOffice and Immigration Info

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Canadian Immigration and Citizenship

www.cic.gc.ca

Australian Immigration

www.immi.gov.au

Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force

<http://www.lgirtf.org>

Embassies Around the World

<http://www.embassyworld.com>

How to Subscribe

If you wish to receive Love Immigrants - The Ezine once a month, please send a blank e-mail with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to: coachjulia@loveimmigrants.com

Please help us reach love immigrants around the globe and forward this Ezine to your contacts who you think would benefit. We thank you for your support!

Featured Interview: Rebecca Gjendem - Norway and Back

Becky Gjendem, US citizen, LI to Norway from 1999 to 2001, repatriate to the US in 2001

1. Rebecca, tell me a bit about your background:

My name is Rebecca (Becky) Gjendem. I'm 37 and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Journalism. I enjoy hiking (although I don't do much of that in Florida; I left my sturdy hiking boots in Norway), photography, reading, writing and keeping up with family and friends around the world. I have traveled throughout the United States and Europe, and I lived in Norway for two years.

2. How did you meet your LI Partner?

Trond came to Nebraska as a high-school foreign-exchange student and returned to complete college, where we met. We've been together ever since.

3. Where you looking for love?

Actually, no; it just happened. We knew each other for about a year as members of the same group on campus. One day something just clicked.

4. What was your first clue that Trond was special to you?

Not long after we got together, he returned to Norway for the summer. It felt like the longest three months of my life. This was before we had e-mail, and we still have the stacks of letters we wrote to each other that summer.

5. How did you decide to relocate to be with your Norwegian husband?

He actually lived in the States for 12 years before we moved to Norway. We'd talked for years about giving Norway a try and finally made the move in 1999.

6. What was difficult about choosing to move to Norway?

We'd planned two years for the move, so it was heartbreaking to realize in January 1999 that it might not be the right thing for us to do. It was a huge financial risk. We knew we couldn't count on two salaries for a while (and it turned out I was never able to get a full-time job), and he was disappointed with the few job opportunities available and the huge cut in pay he would take, even though he was offered a high salary by Norwegian standards. After living in Florida for five years, he also realized he wasn't used to the cold and dark winters, which was at its height in January.

7. Did you have support of family and friends?

Yes, they were wonderful

8. What tips would you give others in your situation?

Picking up and moving to another country isn't for everyone. If you have the desire, take a chance, but always give yourself an out if it turns out it's not for you.

Featured Interview: Rebecca Gjendem - continued

9. What happened that you didn't expect?

It was more difficult than I expected to get a job. I never got full-time work in the two years we lived there. I was told point blank by the editor of the local newspaper that he would never hire me over a Norwegian. I applied for every job there (and other places) but never got hired.

10. How did you cope with living in Norway?

In the beginning I learned all I could. I met my neighbors, made new friends and got to know my husband's family. I took Norwegian classes and helped start a study group and an American group. Even though I couldn't get a full-time job, I did freelance work. I stayed in touch with family and friends back home. They were often a great help to me. Toward the end of our stay, I didn't cope very well. I was depressed and cried uncontrollably at times. The last few months we were there, two of my husband's grandparents and a great aunt died. I was also concerned about friends and family back home dealing with deaths and illnesses. It was a very difficult time.

11. How have you grown because of this experience?

I've gained an appreciation for what it must be like to be an immigrant in my own country. I've realized that no matter what I think my limits are, I can always handle more. I might not want to, but I can. I've gotten a deeper understanding of some "innately Norwegian" things about my husband. Many times over the two years in Norway I thought, "So that's where that comes from."

12. Do you view your nationality differently now?

I appreciate my homeland more than I did before. It may not be perfect, but I know now that it's better than some places. And it's my home. I fit in here. I've been home for a year now, yet I still wake up every morning happy and grateful to be here. An amusing television commercial airs here in Florida. A nurse is in a hospital nursery surrounded by babies. She hears, "Pssst!" and warily looks around until she finds the bassinet it comes from. Then she hears, "Hey, where am I?" She's hesitant but replies, "Memorial Hospital ... in Florida." Two little fists go up in the air followed by an emphatic, "Yessssss!" That sums up how I feel about being home.

13. What support didn't you have that would have made your situation easier?

I was unable to travel home in the two years we lived in Norway due for financial reasons and I think that was one of the most difficult things to handle.

14. Have you chosen to marry or make your partnership legal? Was living in a foreign country part of your decision to do this?

We married in 1993 after we graduated from college. You could say Trond's living in America was part of the decision, although we wanted to get married anyway. (He'd always been able to stay here because he was a student.) It was special as a lot of Trond's family came from Norway for our graduation and wedding. Instead of taking a honeymoon, we took his Norwegian family to a Sons of Norway celebration and spent the next couple of weeks showing them Nebraska.

Becky - thanks for sharing your story - I admire your courage to face those winters!

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The Comparison Trap Exercise:

We have noticed a common pattern between Immigrants and Expats to compare their current situation/country/culture to their previous one.

This can be damaging to a Love Immigrant relationship. It can cause partner's to become defensive of their culture and themselves and feel constantly disrespected or undervalued. This exercise may help you find ways to move past the comparison trap by identifying what you are doing so you can start to work past it.

Write these sentences out on a separate piece of paper and fill in the blanks. Write out as many as you have answers to fill in the blanks.

I'm not _____ enough compared to _____.

This country is not _____ enough compared to _____.

My partner is not _____ enough compared to _____.

If you discovered you are making comparisons it is time to let them go. Work on raising your confidence and self esteem in your new location and find ways to accept and enjoy the differences.

If possible, find other LI's and Expats to share your initial culture confusions and struggles with and keep the complaining and comparing out of your relationship. I have found it is important to be honest but that my partner doesn't always need to be the one to hear it. Identifying common traits with another LI is validating and more appropriate.

Have you read the Love Immigrant preparation questions at www.loveimmigrants.com?

Do you have tips or funny stories about your experience living abroad with your partner?

Share a part of your story and email it to coachjulia@loveimmigrants.com and we will post them on the website for others to share in your joy, laughter, confusion or craziness.

Your tips or experience may help someone else!

Love Quote:

If there ever comes a day when we can't be together,
Keep me in your heart, I'll stay there forever.



Winnie the Pooh, Pooh Bear to Christopher Robin

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A Passionate Plea: I know first hand what it's like to be in an abusive marriage. Thankfully, I moved on from that destructive relationship and have a supportive and healthy marriage today. However, it was because of my prior knowledge and experience that I took extra precaution in going abroad, meeting someone "alone" in a foreign country and eventually moving to his turf with his language, support system and laws. I knew enough to know that love didn't protect me in the past.

I have spoken with and heard of many Love Immigrants who didn't take the necessary precautions and found themselves in terrifying and violent situations with someone they thought they loved and knew. Be mature, be a responsible person, be realistic... Before you move, learn the basic terms for help (woman's shelter/police) in your foreign country, create a back up plan and maintain a personal bank account with money that you can always access. This isn't paranoia - this is common sense. Every LI victim I spoke to didn't think it could happen to her and spent a lot of money moving to his country thus depleting her resources and then in time his behavior changed and she was stuck. I'm a volunteer for *[AWOS](#) and strongly urge you to learn this information and know there are resources for women living abroad who are victims of domestic violence. *AWOS - American Women Over Seas Domestic Violence Fund is US based but maybe able to provide resources for women of other nationalities as well. International Crisis Line +1 (866)-879-6636

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: [Jafa Coaching Programs](#)

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](#), [Women with Foreign Partners](#), and [DutchUSA.com](#)