

## TOP 3 CHALLENGES FOR SINGLE EXPATS KEEPING THEM SINGLE



### **Top 3 Challenges for Single Expats Keeping Them Single**

You are a single expat, experiencing the thrill of being assigned to a foreign country, the exhilaration of new sights and sounds and the satisfaction of living the dream career. What about relationships? As an expat, being single can give you a freedom that those in relationships can't perhaps enjoy, leaving you open to meet new people, travel and enjoy yourself on your own terms. However, for some this same freedom can lead to a sense of isolation – and some challenges that are unique to single expats. Here are the top 3 challenges single expats experience when looking for a partner.

#### **1. Miss their support network**

In just one generation, society has substantially changed. In the past, professionals developed their careers in their home country and usually spent their lives in one place. People would find a partner they knew either because they went to the same school, grew up in the same village, or went to the same church, etc. With mobility came expansion of the social circles. We now study abroad, get overseas assignments and meet so many more people that our circle of potential partners should actually be expanding. In addition, with people tending to study longer, having a desire to travel/ explore other countries and parts of the world, people are more career oriented and in general the need to settle down and form families has been postponed. Yet, when finding a partner does become a priority, the Single Expat no longer has the security of that base of friends on which to rely, nor the familiarity of family, customs and culture in which to find a soul-mate.

#### **2. Focus on Professional Life**

After arrival in the new country, the Single Expat tends to focus on his or her new assignment. The expat assignment is a great opportunity to advance in your career and you are keen and up for the challenge. Of course you are prepared and willing to invest extra time and energy in settling in your new expat assignment. Your company trusted you and invested in you and you want to prove they have made the right choice. So the single expat focuses on their professional life thinking that it is only a temporary situation and that soon they will be able to start dating. However, the focus on their professional life often becomes a longer-term pattern, or even a vicious cycle. Once settled in the new function, undoubtedly another professional challenge that needs our attention comes along.

Also, should the expat have had a date scheduled for after work, he/she would have left the office earlier, but when this is not the case, single expats often tend to work long hours and that in turn makes the possibility to find a partner more challenging.

One might think that from a company's perspective the single expat is the ideal employee; they are mobile, flexible and focused on their professional life, which in the short term might be true. However, the need to love and be loved is a basic human need. Expats who are in a fulfilling relationship are actually often more happy and therefore more productive during their expat assignment.

### **3. Put Personal Life on Hold**

The Single Expat often thinks that the Expat assignment in the new country is just for a few years. And although, the single expat may realize that it is important to have a social life that they enjoy, we have come across a lot of expats who reasoned that it would not make sense to invest in starting a relationship knowing that you will move to another country in the near future. We also know (our clients have seen and heard it all) that even though your company tells you that you may soon get another assignment/ project elsewhere, in this day and age of uncertainty, anything can happen. A reorganization, a merger, a restructuring, an acquisition, downsizing, budget cuts, etc. can turn what was going to be a short stay in the new country into a very long stay.

So our advice for single expats is to never put your personal life on hold for your professional life and don't let the revolving door of expat life get the better of you. Make your personal life a priority from the start and make a conscious effort to build up a social life as soon as you arrive. Join activities around your centers of interest (religion, sports, theatre, cooking, etc. and discover new ones, attend social events, join your local colleagues for after work drinks. Having a life outside of work considerably increases your chances of meeting a partner and most likely also makes you a more fun and interesting date. Build up a new social network and spend your free time with other singles who are positive, supportive, fun, and willing to do things.

Even if you should start dating someone nice just months before you are going on your next expat assignment, if this person is attractive to you, you will want to continue the relationship and if the person is right for you, you will find a way to be together. So, don't wait - go ahead and date!