

# A Portable Identity

A Woman's Guide to Maintaining a Sense of Self While Moving Overseas

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## *Chapter 20*

### *Your Portable Identity:*

#### *Using The Wheel Wherever You Go, Including Repatriation*

In Part One of this book you gained an understanding about the loss of identity associated with an overseas move, including the effect of living in a foreign culture. We tracked, step-by-step, the entire process of identity loss over time, beginning with how you defined yourself before the decision to move overseas. We illustrated how your original identity picture goes through several alterations: first from the decision to move; then by the actual departure; third, by the entry into the foreign country; and, finally, by the addition of new roles and new relationships in your life overseas.

By illustrating these changes and phases, you were able to understand the effect of the move on your identity. You learned that after an overseas move, your identity is in transition and that experiencing a wide range of feelings is normal within the context of so much change.

In Parts Two, Three, and Four, we showed you how having an identity in transition puts you on the threshold of personal growth and change. We introduced The Wheel, a model we developed to help you take charge of reconstructing your identity based on choice, rather than circumstance. We discussed the process of reconstructing identity as a series of three steps and illustrated how, as you proceed through these steps (making a commitment, accessing your personal resources, and picking up tools) you set The Wheel in motion and move toward a positive outcome in your identity's transition. By setting The Wheel in motion, your identity becomes what you envision and what you reconstruct based on what is important to *you*.

### **The Positive Outcome**

To refer to an earlier metaphor, when you set The Wheel in motion, your identity begins to take shape again, like the crab that gradually grows a new shell. In essence, by creating a shell that "fits," you bring resolution to the state of transition your identity has been in. The results of your efforts are twofold. First, you put back into place the four facets of your identity (internal view, external factors, roles, and relationships) altered by the move. This will support the success

of your current overseas experience. Second, your identity becomes portable. You'll have an identity rooted to your sense of self which can thrive outside of your home country and culture. This will serve you well when you face the next move, either to another country or when you return to your home country.

In the next section we'll look at the positive outcome of setting The Wheel in motion as it relates to your current overseas experience. We'll look at how the benefits of setting The Wheel in motion during future moves, including repatriation, can result in a positive outcome as well.