

# Managing Conflict

by Margaret Dutton Feldmeth

**R**aising three young girls – ages 5 ½, 4 and 2 – I have become relatively good at handling conflict. “She’s touching me! Someone coloured on my picture! She drank my lemonade!” And so on. Our days are filled with sisterly love and antagonism.

We have lived in Zurich now for eight months. That puts us smack dab in the middle of the six to twelve month acclimation period we have been told is standard for an international move. I’m fully embracing that time period.

## Internal conflict

I love living here. We are on a three year contract, which seems just the right amount of time to experience European living without losing sight of the ‘homeland’. Switzerland is dreamlike – so beautiful, so peaceful, so clean and well organized. The weather is beyond compare, and the parks and family options are seemingly limitless. But, I am filled with sadness. I miss my sister. I miss my hamburgers and Mexican food. I miss being able to read my mail. I miss being two or less time zones from friends and family.

And there is my conflict. My internal conflict. How can I be somewhere so beautiful, absolutely love being here, yet feel so sad?

My husband found our apartment for us, and he did exceptionally well. Our balcony overlooks the lake and the Alps, we are surrounded by animal pastures and farmland, and we have ample space for each girl (myself included) to find a quiet corner when precious alone time is needed. I often sit on our balcony, enjoying the cool lake breeze and listening to the bells around the goats’ necks ring. We will never live somewhere so peaceful and pretty. I just wish my sister was sitting next to me.

## The magic of time

I have been told that it all takes time. Back to that magical six to twelve month acclimation window. I think it will also get better once more of my loved ones come for a visit and can

better visualize my new life and home. It is strange to have a life which should be describable, yet fail to find the right words to fully paint the picture. Switzerland must be experienced firsthand.

## No such thing as faraway

So, I am going to trust that time will help ease my internal conflict. I become more fully involved in Swiss life as time passes. That is good. My daughters’ conversations (and conflicts) keep me grounded. Our weekend getaways are always fabulous and always lift the spirits. My ability to communicate can only improve. Maybe someday I won’t need a dictionary to read the mail. And, my regular phone calls to my sister remind me that we really aren’t all that far apart. Distance is only relative. ■

[Expats@TheStork.ch](mailto:Expats@TheStork.ch)



“Fly free and happy beyond birthdays and across forever, and we’ll meet now and then when we wish, in the midst of the one celebration that never can end.” - from *‘There’s No Such Place As Far Away’* by Richard Bach