

# NovoExpat: The New Expat

Olga and Marianne have a gift. They listen - truly listen, without being distracted by their own inner voices, opinions or experiences.

When you are with them, the conversation is about you. A you they will help you find, if you feel you've lost yourself moving from country to country.

Where does the name NovoExpat come from? "We chose the name, because there is a new - novo - type of expat: those who work and live in another country on a local contract, as well as younger people and more women," Marianne Hermesen tells. "But, though there is a new type of expat, they still have the same issues to contend with. And this is our area of expertise."

## Balance

"We coach expats, to help them focus on a work-life balance," Marianne continues. "Expats work long hours, because they know that they are expensive and that expectations are high. They feel they have to prove they deserve this position. But being sent abroad is more than just a placement by your employer; it is an adventure, a change, an opportunity to discover things about yourself." Adds Olga Romanillos: "We focus not only on the executive expat, but also on the spouse. In many cases, their career has been put on hold, and they are exposed to daily life, which is far less structured than that of their partner, who still has a job to go to. During the first year, expats and their spouses are offered a lot of practical support in finding a house, schools, a doctor, arranging permits, insurances, etc. But after that year, when all practical matters have been taken care of, is when the spouse has the time to look around and think about what direction she plans to give her - because, in most cases, the spouse is still a woman - life. That's when she starts to look at her position in all this; what am I going to do, who have I become, how much am I expected to adapt to this new culture?"

## Bumpy Ride

Olga and Marianne start out with the Wheel of Life-exercise - on which you indicate your satisfaction with various areas in your life, such as career, personal growth, money, and fun/recreation. Once you have filled this out, they ask you: How bumpy would the ride be if this were a real wheel? This is a good starting point for figuring out how to bring more balance in your life. "When you take a look at this," Marianne says, "you realize that everything is affected by a shift in any one of these areas and all of them are affected by a move. It's normal that you feel out of control. Once you become aware of this, you also become aware of the fact that you have choices and that you can achieve more of a balance in your life."

"We are coaches, and coaches do not offer a fixed solution," Olga tells. "We don't give advice. We help others find the answers to their problems from inside themselves. We are there to listen, free of judgment, and to explore with you the different options you have to change things, that you are not a victim of the events in your life, but that you can take control. We help you find your inner compass and the beauty is that the things that you learn from these sessions, are something you can apply forever. We ask you what your goals are, your plans for the future. Do they have to be deferred to the future? What is it that you plan on getting from them? Is it something you can achieve now?" "But not everything lends itself for the here and now," Marianne adds. "We also help you achieve your long-term goals by developing a plan, if it is something that cannot be done now."

## Telephone

Marianne and Olga also offer telephone coaching - particularly to their clients abroad: "Some people worry that this isn't personal or effective enough," Marianne says, "but nothing could be further from the truth. We have a lot of experience coaching on the phone, also with executives. Coaching is about listening, not only to what is being said, but particularly to what isn't being said. When you have only the voice to go by, you can hear the energy behind what the person is saying. You can pick up on the subconscious tensions, the suppressed emotions. And precisely because you are not face-to-face, it



feels safer to some people, less threatening, but at the same time more intimate.”

### Sample Sessions

“Potential clients may find it hard to imagine what our sessions are like and therefore hesitant about coming to us. For these people, we have 45 minute sample sessions. Most of them come away from these sessions absolutely amazed at what they have discovered about themselves. We see this as a gift we can offer you, as a client: to listen to yourself.”

Marianne’s background includes 10 years as Marketing Manager for UniGroup Worldwide UTS, which provides global mobility services through 1,500 global service centers on six continents. “I saw, on a daily basis, what expats are faced with and what services they are offered. Those services typically focus on practical issues. What we offer is something different, but not any less important in terms of making the placement abroad a success. We focus on *you*; how are *you* doing, how are *you* coping?”

### Domino

Olga worked for Philips for 19 years, first in Spain and later in Eindhoven. “When you make the decision to move to a new country, this decision has a domino-effect. I have experienced first-hand the struggles of finding your way in a new country. You know you have to adapt - but how much? You have to find a balance between being flexible, but not losing yourself. You feel very connected with your home country, in a way that you didn’t experience when you were living there, and you

become aware of how much you are defined by the culture of that country. Yet, you also know that you have to change to be able to function well in this new work environment or society. What you discover through our coaching program is to not fear who you are, but how to bring your values to your new situation while embracing the challenge and adventure of adapting to your new country.”

As Marianne explains: “There is always an action after coaching. Many people come to us because they want to make a change in their lives. For instance, they want to learn to say ‘no’, or they want to go back to school, or they want to go out and sample life in their new country. To do this, they need to get out of their ‘comfort zone’. The ‘action’ I just mentioned is the accountability part; for instance, we agree that our client will turn down a request three times the following week, or that they will look into what classes they want to take, or that they will go out there and explore.”

### Services

NovoExpat also offers a wide selection of services, created for expat executives, teams and spouses, ranging from workshops - such as *The Manager as Coach*, aimed at learning to listen to your employees and to empower them, or *Living Your Values*, created for expat spouses - to pre-departure, pre-repatriation and foreign assignment coaching sessions. For more information, you can visit their website: [www.NovoExpat.com](http://www.NovoExpat.com). In order to determine how bumpy your ride is at the moment, be sure to do their online Wheel of Life-exercise.

*Olga (left)  
and Marianne*