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Moving to Japan

By Dr. Douglas Berger, M.D., Ph D. | [ASK THE EXPERT](#)



SUNN TOUR

Become a Parent



QUESTION

"We will be moving to Japan soon and have heard that there are many stresses of living in a Japanese community. Do you have any advice?"

- Branson family

A lot of what you will experience in Japan depends on the environment you will be in and your expectations. If your family will be on an "Expat Package" where you will be provided with perks like housing in city center, international schools, an American Club membership, etc., and you will be in an international corporation or a homemaker in an international environment, then you may find few logistical stresses of living in Japan. The downside is that your Japan experience may be limited to feeling like a perpetual "guest." If your expectations fit with that environment then you will have little stress and enjoy your time here very much.

If you are coming as a student or plan to begin a job as a local hire you may need to make more effort to make international friends. If you want to study and speak Japanese, and expect that you will have responsibility at work, and fit in with the local people in a deeper way, you may need to modulate your expectations; or you will feel like the perpetual "door-to-door salesman", always trying to get your foot in the door, and sometimes getting your foot jammed.

All foreigners are somewhere on the spectrum of the "guest" at one end and the "door-to-door salesman" at the other end. At either end, whether one feels stress or some cultural exclusion depends on the social relationships one makes, the flexibility one has in being magnanimous in difficult situations, and the challenges one is willing to take. At the end of the day, it's the personal characteristics of each individual that determines the amount of stress and happiness one feels. If you really feel out of place or that stress is too great, then you may benefit by discussing that with a mental health professional.

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