

### Do you think you can relate to the TCK DEFINITION?

A third culture kid is a person who has spent a considerable part of their developmental years outside their parents' culture. Third culture kids are people who are familiarized to travel and relocation. They form relations with people from different ethnicities, though at the same time, do not feel 'rooted' to a single cultural background. Despite having connections and memories linking to each country that they have spent time in, the only kind of people they can fully relate to are other TCKs. Luckily, majority of the students at UWCSEA are believed to be third culture children. We provide cultural diversity and make our education more interesting.

I feel that I can relate to the TCK definition as I have lived in 3 different countries, been to 4 schools and speak 3 diverse languages; English, Hindi and French. My family and I enjoy travelling very much and have visited over 25 countries. During my travels I have experienced many cultures and have had a reasonable amount of exposure to their customs and religions. The small bubble mentality does not apply to me as I have learnt to put myself in someone else's shoes. Moreover, internationality does not intimidate me and I appreciate having a range of different traditions to reach out to.

Originally, I am from India but I have been brought up in Singapore and Dubai. Therefore my personal culture is a blend of Indian, Arabic and Singaporean influences. I think that this helps me be more peaceful and understanding towards other cultures. For example, I will never be racist. I remember when I was visiting the United States, while waiting to get through immigration, I saw an African American arguing with an American. It turns out that they had a problem being in the same line as each other. As a TCK, I found that strange because I have no issues with someone who has a different skin color from me - I am open to all cultures.

More things that define me as a TCK include the ability to adapt, being politically, socially astute, being environmentally aware and having a privileged lifestyle. During the course of my life, I have changed countries, schools, communities and friends. These events have led to me being a more flexible person who goes out of their comfort zone. Due to this characteristic, I have been able to make an effortless move from OFS, my old school to UWCSEA, this year. Crossing the cultural bridge at UWCSEA has been easy because of my familiarity with divergent backgrounds.

Although there are many positive aspects to being a TCK that I can relate to, there are a couple of negative points that I feel apply to me; 'rootless-ness', difficulty with commitment and being unable to relate to the natives of one of my countries. I have often found myself going into culture shock upon returning to my "home" country,

India! I have either been unable to understand the dialect or have had difficulty empathizing with the traditions, as I have not been accustomed to them. For a third culture kid, making commitments to people, places or activities because of the constant change. Fortunately, I have been promised that I will be able to graduate from UWCSEA and hence have no trouble committing to this school or the friends I meet here.

On a lighter note, I believe I do relate to the TCK definition because I speak three and a half languages, but can't spell in any, I consider 800 miles away "close", when asked a question, absentmindedly reply in a different language, I have friends from 27 different countries, I cringe when people mispronounce foreign terms, I know the airport as well as my room, I think VISA is a certificate in my passport, not a plastic card one carries in their wallet, I bargain, I know how to pack, I use the metric system and Celsius and the list goes on. In conclusion, being a TCK has had an extremely positive impact on my life and has made me realize what a small and unique world it is after all.