

# Survival Tips from “Stuck” Parents

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For parents who are stuck in a foreign country with their children after a relationship breakdown, being “stuck” can feel devastating. The parents we speak to typically feel imprisoned, trapped and controlled by their ex-partner and the legal system.

Many stuck parents face practical obstacles such as financial problems, visa issues and continued threat of violence after domestic abuse. And on top the emotional need to go home to family and familiar culture the desire to go home can be overwhelming and all consuming.

This can take a massive toll on the parent’s sense of wellbeing and ability to cope. We asked stuck parents to share their ‘top tips’ for surviving and thriving under these very difficult circumstances.

Here they are...

## BOOSTING YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING

It is important to keep living and not put life on hold as you wait for a decision.

Cry if you need to but allow yourself to be happy as well.

Keep busy, find something to do if you have quiet moments alone, running, walking, baking, knitting, drawing, yoga, study, work to prevent thinking about the endless negative possibilities.

Volunteer - helping their people puts things in to perspective.

Understand that just because your ex (or anyone) says something, that doesn't make it true and you do not have to defend yourself - often the best response is no response.

Court decisions are often unfair, the sooner you can accept this and let go of the sense of unfairness, your mental health will greatly improve.

He isn't doing this to you, this law and the court system enables your situation.

## HELPING YOUR CHILDREN

Focus on your children rather than on where you want to be, the process will happen regardless, the thing you can affect the most is how your children are impacted by your situation.

Try to stay in the present moment, you can't change the past, you can't see in to the future - your children need you to be present.

You can build an amazing life no matter where you are or what you might have. Make the best life you can where you are right now for your children.

## RECOVERING FROM ABUSE

Learn about domestic violence, narcissism and toxic relationships if relevant - local women’s centers, online groups, libraries are good resource.

Talk about your situation with friends you really trust.

Find a good psychologist (and lawyer).

Don't invest any energy in what your ex is doing or has (money, girlfriends etc).

## IMPROVING LEGAL OUTCOMES

Inform yourself, lawyers don't know everything. Use free half hour legal advice to check what a lawyer has told you.

Hold on and remember every detail of your own case.

Document everything, report all instances of abuse to the police immediately. Keep screen shots and record conversations.

Be reasonable and accept that it is important for children to have a relationship with both parents, unless it is harmful. Courts need to see a healthy, honest and reasonable parent. Never exclude the other parent or give the court any reason to accuse you of parental alienation.

## Helpful Links:

[www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/surviving-after-abuse/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/surviving-after-abuse/)

[www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/domestic-abuse-and-your-mental-health/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/domestic-abuse-and-your-mental-health/)

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