



Name: Fabrizio

Home country: Italy

Education: Vocational education. Major in cooking, minor in food and beverage. Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences and Community Development.

Occupation in home country: Food and beverage manager

Moved to Finland: in 2011 with his family

Languages: Italian, English, Spanish

Intercultural relationship: Fabrizio was married to an American woman, they were together for 18 years. His ex-wife comes from an intercultural family, too.

"MY PATH": my story before Finland, in Finland, my goals and hopes

Fabrizio, his wife and their two sons were living in the US and later moved to Italy. However, they realised that economical and social were not satisfying for raising the kids and decided to move somewhere else. They chose Finland as a country of residence consciously, as they believed Finland would be a good place for the kids to grow up. The couple conducted extensive research about the country to find out how the educational system works, how the state supports citizens and how likely one of them would be able to find a job. They even came to Helsinki in winter to see how the climate was and in late summer - to visit schools in person and talk to teachers to figure out which school their children would go to in case they were to move. The kids eventually went to an international school where the communication between peers and teachers happened mostly in English, and Finnish was taught as a second language. However, Fabrizio thinks that it would have been better if they went to a Finnish school straight away because the kids' Finnish skills were not developing fast enough to live in Finland and make friends outside school.

Considering the fact that Fabrizio has moved to foreign countries a lot of times in his life (he has lived in Italy, the US, the Netherlands, the UK, and Thailand), he was used to not building up any expectations with regards to living in a new place. That is why he did not have any preconceived notions about Finland. The only idea he had in mind about the country was that life here was organized and well-structured.

Fabrizio's tip № 1: If you move to Finland with kids and plan to stay in the country for a long time, consider an option of putting children in a Finnish school rather than an International school. In this way, they will be able to learn Finnish faster.

EMPLOYMENT

Fabrizio moved to Finland earlier than the rest of his family to be able to settle down and prepare everything for their arrival, such as finding a job and a place to stay. There was a high demand for professionals in his industry, so Fabrizio found a job in the food and beverage sector within two weeks of his arrival without Finnish skills.

However, after he and his wife got divorced, he decided to change his career, as his previous job did not have a fixed schedule and quite often he would need to do evening and weekend shifts. He wanted to have more certainty with his schedule to be able to have joint custody with his wife, when both divorced

parents take care of kids equally. Moreover, he was always motivated by helping others, so his career choice fell on social services.

Fabrizio admits that the opportunities he has now careerwise are the result of him making all his decisions strategically during his time at university where he got into shortly after he had decided to change careers. For example, he participated in projects that would be beneficial for his career or where he could gain useful contacts. Moreover, he attended different seminars in his industry where he could not understand a word, as they were in Finnish. However, he was able to talk to people during coffee breaks getting to know them and sharing his story and aspirations. He also suggests learning Finnish for increasing chances of being employed. Although he was able to get his jobs without the language skills, he believes he would have way more opportunities speaking Finnish.

Fabrizio's tip № 2: If you are a student, start making your choices regarding projects and courses strategically. Analyze what knowledge or contacts can be beneficial for your career in the future.

Attend events even if they are in Finnish, as you will still have the opportunity to network with other professionals in your field.

INTERCULTURAL FAMILY/COUPLE

Fabrizio's kids live both at his place and their mother's place, taking turns. The children have always been exposed to their parents' cultures, as they had a chance to live both in Italy and the US. Moreover, Fabrizio's relatives live all around the world, and the kids visited them quite often, becoming familiar with new cultures.

Being raised in an intercultural environment, one of Fabrizio's children once told him that he was not sure what culture or country he belonged to. However, Fabrizio believes that one does not need to put a cultural label on one's identity. He said to his kids that they were very happy to be multicultural, as they could choose what they liked or disliked of all the cultures they had been exposed to. Fabrizio points out that especially in intercultural families, it is important to understand that people can choose to represent their cultures in a way they want to, and not in the way everyone expects them to.

Having only one cultural orientation can be dangerous for someone who moves to new countries often, as it can lead to an identity crisis. One can feel the burden of not "fitting in" anywhere if one has not been born and raised, or lived in different countries. For instance, Fabrizio says that he is being stereotyped in Italy as well now, as he does not fit a certain image of how a man of his age should look like and what kind of position he should have in a society. However, he does not box himself in anymore regarding his cultural identity, so the comments from his fellow countrymen do not bother him.

Fabrizio says that being raised up in an intercultural family undoubtedly had its effect on his children's mindsets and plans for the future. For example, the older son would already like to move to another country for university studies like Fabrizio did when he was around his son's age. The father believes that it is natural that he wants to explore the world. What is more, he would be surprised if their kids did not want to live in new countries given their father's and family's backgrounds.

Fabrizio's tip № 3: Show the cultural diversity to your children, for example, through your own experiences. Let them choose aspects that they like and dislike about each culture.

It is sometimes difficult yet important to realise that living in a new country changes your personality in certain ways. It is a normal process, be open and compassionate to your new self.

