

How to beat waiting room blues

By Swati Desai

The case of a girl who leaves her job in India to get married to a hardworking engineer husband returning from the US for two weeks for matrimonial purpose has become fairly mundane. She may be modern enough to expect a career after the change of visa status or traditional enough to expect to set up her house and start a family, the initial experiences can be common.

The new independent apartment in the US overlooking a swimming pool sounds glamorous. Initial phone calls to parents to India are full of descriptions of fun-filled trips to amusement parks, casinos, may be even skiing and boating.

After first few months, the glamour wears off, busy husband's long hours become extremely boring, the surrounding quietude and aloof attitude be-

comes overbearing, the differences with the husband start becoming arguments and occasionally irritating, setting up the house does not take up so much time. Sometimes the husband's parents come to visit for several months. Eventually, this can become gruelling and overpowering for various reasons.

The low level depression is a common experience but nobody describes the real nature of it. Several tips for the couple are offered here to prepare them for a more meaningful experience in the waiting room to have a job or a child.

- Beware of the signs of depression: feeling unusually low, feeling easily irritable, shopping urges, harshly judgmental attitude, marked change in sleep patterns or appetite, sudden weight change, and finding obstacles in beginning any activity.

- Life in the US is activity oriented. Before leaving for the US, think hard about what you enjoy doing outside

some money on things like joining an evening class (could be pottery, child psychology, or computers), pursuing a hobby, or teaching your wife to drive. It is money worth spent.

- If you want to volunteer your time for a cause you believe in, each city will have an Infoline (call 411 to get the number) which will give you relevant phone numbers. Volunteering opportunities range from caring for animals to teaching under privileged school children.

- It helps to find out about neighbours and having some contact with them. No need to shy away because of their foreignness. Most will enjoy your friendly attitude. If you prefer only Indian community, you may want to arrange for day time contact with other wives. Start a book club.

- Before leaving for the US, make sure to find relatives and friends who

of work, and discuss it with your husband.

- In India things happen to you, in the US you need to make them happen. Any activity you want to pursue, plethora of information is available, if you take the initiative.

- Taking initiative may include learning to drive, exploring the public transportation system, finding the location of the closest public library, closest university or college, and community parks. These resources in the US are amazingly rich in classes, information, and lectures.

- Husbands, be prepared to spend

would help in case of trouble, keep in touch with them, and ensure putting money aside for troubled times if they arise.

- Familiarise yourself with the rules for physical safety in the US. Safe areas, daytime safety in the apartment, safety in public transportation and so on. Do not plan to be in the waiting room, instead use your time to prepare for more meaningful life ahead.

(The author, a psychotherapist in private practice in Los Angeles and a mental health consultant to South Asian agencies, is on a visit to ISB, Hyderabad)

