

THIS *MESSY* MOBILE LIFE:

How a **MOLA** can help globally
mobile families create a life by design

Mariam Navaid Ottimofiore

What This Book Will Do For Your Family

I wrote *This Messy Mobile Life* to help globally mobile families; multicultural, multilingual and multi-mobile families understand who they are, what they are creating and how to benefit from owning and sharing their life story. Each of the following chapters is made up of practical tips, advice and strategies on various aspects of your messy mobile life and goes on to include an exercise for you to complete with your family. In addition, each chapter includes conversation starters for you to explore together.

In short, this book will help your family in three important ways: it will encourage you to make sense of your globally mobile life, it will equip you with the MOLA toolbox on how to go from a mess to a mola and it will inspire you to claim your story and share it with others to reap the benefits of your journey.

It Will Encourage You to Make Sense of Your Globally Mobile Life

When you live a life on the move, you are constantly adding new experiences, countries, cultures, languages, identities and so much more to your life story. Each move involves gains and losses, but often you forget to reflect on the end result. What are all these global experiences leading to? Who are you becoming? How is your family culture changing? What have you found yourself insisting upon? What challenges have shaped you and which opportunities have you enjoyed the most?

This Messy Mobile Life will help you to make sense of your globally mobile life by ‘joining the dots’ between its component parts. It will show you how factors like your cultures, languages and mobility are contributing to your overall life story and how to deal with the challenges they throw in your way. It will help you to see what issues stand out for your family and how to address them. It will also show you how to enjoy the benefits of your global life and give you important rules on dealing with each ‘messy’ thread.

... Equip You With the MOLA Toolbox Helping You to Go From Mess to MOLA

This book is designed to give you and your family a toolbox for navigating through your global lives. My MOLA toolbox consists of four specific components you need to go from a mess to a MOLA Family. Thus, in my MOLA framework, a MOLA is an acronym, and I explain what the M, O, L and A stand for in each chapter.

When you are creating your MOLA Family, it helps to think of the M, O and the L as ‘the what’ and the A as ‘the how.’ Together, they form your MOLA toolbox and show you how to create your MOLA and use it to steer your way successfully through your global life.

... Inspire You to Own Your Story

Last but not least, this book will help you and inspire you to own your family life story and to share it proudly with the world. Towards the end of the book, I teach you how to ‘show’ your mola to those who matter; from international schools, to your multinational corporations and organizations, to relocation agencies, to your extended families, to other MOLA Families and to people in your home country and host country.

I chose the concept of a mola for this book because in South America a mola is a shirt that you wear to show the world who you are. It is something you put on every day, and wear proudly, as it represents your unique heritage and story. I want this book to inspire you and your family to proudly wear your mola, your life story for all the world to see.

A mola is not meant to be hidden in a corner somewhere in your wardrobe where it gathers dust. If you hide it, you negate all the wonderful experiences that have given you your unique design. You are denying part of who you are. But if you show your mola, you display its richness and have the power to understand your place in the world.

How to Use This Book

This book is a blend of rich insights into messy global lives, and at the same time a workbook and toolbox designed to help you think and look at your mobile life in a creative way. I advise that the first time you read it should be from cover to cover, to understand the full mola concept and the MOLA framework. But you may find that certain chapters relate to your family more, and I encourage you to bookmark them and return to them again.

As I introduce concepts, I support them with examples of families and situations, and provide expert insights to enable you to find parallels with your own situation. You may also find that the more familiar you become with the tools, the more you can decode/decipher your own situation and that of those around you.

Keep a pencil handy to jot down notes and do your exercises at the end of each chapter. I also encourage you to keep a MOLA notebook, to write down ideas and themes that pop into your mind as you read along. You can of course enjoy doing this with your children too.

You can engage in the conversation starters at the dining table as a family activity that can help you explore several themes together. I include conversation starters in each chapter because I find that having small, everyday conversations helps you process your messy mobile life as it continues to swirl around you. Often, there are certain crunch times when the messiness in our lives is really revealed – for example when visitors come and pass judgment, when certain holidays carry certain expectations, or when different priorities around family commitments means one partner feels more strongly about getting on a plane than another. It’s at these crunch times, however, that there is even less time than normal to address the issues! By offering

families a conversation starter, I hope you can have these conversations at times that are not frantic and pave the way for better understanding when things do get frantic.

Throughout the book, I use mola/MOLA a lot. Just remember:

Mola = the shirt

MOLA = your toolbox as an acronym and a MOLA Family

For example: “a MOLA Family makes its mola.”

I hope you enjoy reading this book! If you have any questions or comments as you create your MOLA, feel free to email me at mariamottimofiore@gmail.com or head to my website www.andthenwemovedto.com for many more things MOLA.

About the Author



Mariam Navaid Ottimofiore is a Pakistani expat author, writer, researcher and economist. When she was 19 years old, she left her home in Karachi with a blue suitcase and a one-way ticket to Boston. She has lived in nine countries as an expat child and an expat adult: The Kingdom of Bahrain, the United States, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Ghana. 17 years and four continents later, her life on the move as an ATCK is messy. A 40-foot container, an expat husband from another corner of the world and two children born 3,000 miles apart have added complexity, challenges and many joys to living a multicultural, multilingual and multi-mobile life. She currently lives in Accra, Ghana, with her German/Italian husband and her German-Pakistani-Italian kids, born in Singapore and Dubai. Passionate about languages and cultures, Mariam speaks fluent Urdu, English, Hindi and German with some Italian, Danish and Arabic on the side. She is an expert at making embarrassing mistakes in every new language she picks up, is perpetually lost in every new city she calls home and can never remember her new address or where she packed those suede boots!

Mariam has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Political Science from Mount Holyoke College in the US and specialized in Economic Development at the University of Sussex in the UK. Her corporate career saw her work at Morgan Stanley in Houston, USA and Maersk Oil Trading, A.P Moller Maersk in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Mariam made a career change to a full-time writer in 2012. She is the co-author of two books *Export Success and Industrial Linkages in South Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009) and *Insights and Interviews from the 2017 Families in Global Transition Conference* (Summertime Publishing 2018). She has been the Content Editor for *Fuchsia Magazine* in Singapore, and her expat writing has been published in *Expatriate Connect Dubai*, *Global Living Magazine*, *Expatriate Living Singapore*, *Expatriate Living Hong Kong*, *The Huffington Post*, *Sassy Mama Dubai*, *Multicultural Kid Blogs* and *FIDI Global Relocation*. Her expat life has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) for Super Soul Sunday and her expat blog 'And Then We Moved To' has been shortlisted for 'Best Parent Blog 2017' by *Time Out Dubai Kids*. She has also been a conference speaker at the Families in Global Transition conference in The Hague in 2017 and 2018.

Would You Like to Work with Mariam?

If you would like to work with Mariam, you can hire her:

- As a contributing writer for your magazine (physical or online)
- As a content writer for your website if related to living abroad and/or expat life
- As a speaker on expat life and raising a globally mobile family
- As a workshop trainer on 'How to Build Your MOLA Family'
- As a podcast or interviewee expert on expat topics
- As a book club author to give a talk to your book club (online or offline)

You can contact Mariam at:

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