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Moving can be as challenging as it is exciting. Moving is hard for kids. They are leaving behind familiar places and important friends and will be making new friends and adjusting to a new environment. Kids need to feel a sense of stability and purpose in the move. But because they're still learning how to socialize and how to effectively get their needs met, children need caring adults to listen and help them adjust to their new home, now more than ever.

Consider the move in three stages - before, during, and after - and think about your children's needs during each stage. You can make a big difference in how your kids feel about the move and how they adjust afterwards.

Before the Move: Prepare

- Tell your children about the move as soon as you can. The more time they have to think about and prepare for the move, the easier it will be for them.
- Give your children a chance to express their feelings, and be honest about your own feelings. Most children will feel some anger, sadness, or worry about the move. These responses are natural. Tell your children about any sadness you may feel about leaving or uncertainty about a new home, job, or city. This will reassure them that they aren't alone in having worries or concerns.
- Help older children prepare a list of phone numbers and addresses of close friends, relatives, and other important people in their lives. Knowing they can stay in touch with these people is an important part of a successful move.
- If your kids are old enough, let them participate in decision making.
- If you are able to, take your children to your new home and explore the new neighborhood and town or city together. If this isn't possible, take pictures of your new home, the schools they will attend, a nearby park, and anything else that would be interesting to them.
- Make a scrapbook containing pictures of your pre-move home, friends, and other mementos of your life together.
- Call the principals of your children's schools. Set up a meeting with their teachers or, if they're in junior high or high school, guidance counselor. The new school may give you names of students in your child's class who live near your new home. If so, you may want to drop by to meet them and their families before you move in.
- Try to line up some activities in which your child can participate after the move: a sports team, music lessons, art classes, a scouting troop. Sign up for more than one activity in case one falls through or doesn't go well.
- Try to meet families in your new neighborhood before you move. Being familiar with people when you move in will help your children feel more at home.

During the Move: Remember what's important

- Stay as upbeat and calm as you can; a good plan makes this possible. Your mood impacts other family members. With older children, it's important to be honest about some of the uncertainties you have, but also to be generally optimistic about the

move and the positive ways it will affect the family.

- Involve your kids in the packing. Older kids can put their own belongings in boxes. Kids of all ages enjoy decorating the boxes containing their things and doing so will also make finding your children's things easier once you're at the new house!
- Try to stick to your routines. Have meals, naps and bedtimes at the same times as always.
- Don't pack things that your children treasure. Take special blankets, beloved stuffed animals, favorite books, and other prized items in a separate bag or box that you can bring with you in the car or on the plane.
- Help your children say good bye to the important people in their lives.
- Expect the unexpected: few moves go smoothly, anticipate trouble (predict it!) and have a positive, "can do" attitude.

After the move: Getting Settled

- Don't spend too much time unpacking - at least not right away! Get the essentials unpacked but wait on the less important stuff. In the first few days, take time to enjoy your new home with your family. Take walks, spend time at parks, check out local restaurants and take-out spots. Introduce yourselves to your new neighbors.
- Be on the look-out for neighborhood kids, and help introduce your children to them. Invite some of the neighborhood kids over for pizza or a video.
- Let your children have some input, especially in things for their rooms. Let some decisions be entirely up to them - for example, the placement of their bed or the color of the rug or paint in their bedroom.
- Get involved: church groups, synagogues, YMCA and activity clubs, etc. enable socializing.
- If a couple of months have gone by and your child seems unusually troubled, ask a doctor, guidance counselor, or principal if you need a referral. Signs that your child may need help: unusual academic difficulty; ongoing irritability; trouble with peers; changes in sleep or eating habits; a generally despondent mood. Give them time, this behavior can last for 4-5 months for teens.



Above all, listen. Try to be there when your kids get home after the first day at their new schools, even if it means having to leave work early that day. Regularly ask how things are going, and take time to listen. Sometimes kids have a hard time opening up; spending relaxed

time together may help them to bring up whatever is on their minds.

For children and adults, it takes time to feel at home. With your understanding and patience, your children will be reassured that, after a while, things will get easier; everything won't feel so new; and that home is, after all, wherever the family is.

*Helping you through the Relocating Process...
Our goal is that you will be
delighted with the experience.*

