

What All Parents Need To Know To Help Their Kids Survive A Move

Kids can get lost in the shuffle during a relocation. Parents are, understandably, involved in the details of the move — perhaps selling one home and buying another, determining what to pack and what to discard, arranging for the transfer of medical and school records, and countless other responsibilities that go along with moving the family to a new town.

Even when it seems you have less time than ever, it's important to carve out time to give children the emotional support they need during a time of transitions. Here are some strategies:

Explain The ABC's Of Moving

One of the best ways to overcome children's fears is open communication from the start. Young children have no idea what it means to move. Let them know why, when and where you are moving as soon as your decision is final.

It's helpful to take them on a visual tour of the new area. When you break the news about the move, have on hand maps, brochures, videos, photographs and information about the new area. Tell them about recreation areas, places of special interest to children, schools, etc. If possible, bring children along on the house-hunting trip or on a pre-move visit so they can see what to expect. Plan a school visit. If a pre-move visit with children is not possible, take photos of the new home, neighborhood, school, or playground to show them upon your return.

Stay Upbeat

Children tend to mirror their parents' emotions. If you are happy, they'll be happy. Make sure you schedule family time, such as a walk or dinner out with the family so the kids don't feel forgotten.

Listen carefully to their concerns and respond honestly. Negative reactions to moving are common. Accept the negative feelings and be honest about any

doubts you are having, too, while reassuring the child everything will turn out all right. They may be calmed by realizing how "normal" a part of life moving is. Look for age-appropriate books on moving in the library or bookstore and share them with your children.

Involve Them In Planning And Packing Their Stuff

To a small child, the world is made up of possessions. It's "my house, my yard, my tree, my room, my bed, my teddy bear." Assure children most of their world is moving, too.

Have children pack as much of their own stuff as possible — even preschoolers can help. Give them special boxes to pack favorite things in. Label the boxes, "Jamie's stuff." Remind them, when the family gets to the new home, all their things in boxes will go right into their new rooms.

Also, enlist their help in making decisions about what to pack and what to donate or discard. Talk about how they'd like their new room decorated.

Saying Good-Bye

Children, like adults, need closure. Help them prepare to move by creating a memory book. Take pictures of friends, favorite places, family members in favorite rooms of your home. Help your children create a scrapbook to remind them of the "old" home. Include addresses and phone numbers of friends in the book.

Together, plan a going-away party. Make cards with the address of the new home to hand out to friends at the party. Invite them to visit when they can. Reassure your children they will be able to call their old friends, even exchange letters, e-mail or home videos. If visits to the old home town will be possible, let your children know they'll be able to visit their old friends.

When You First Get There

When the family reaches the new home, set up the children's rooms right off the bat. Open the cartons with their stuff and make them feel at home before they have a chance to feel "lost."

Try to keep their schedules as normal as possible. That way, you'll help give them the extra security they need in the new surroundings. Be available at mealtime, bedtime or (if possible) after school to listen and to share in your child's new experiences.

To help them adapt quickly, call on new neighbors to find other children who live nearby. Invite new friends and neighbors to visit. Consider signing up for one or two activities — sports or lessons — to help your child meet new friends and continue special interests. Look to after-school sports or clubs, community centers, religious activities, local parks programs, etc.

If the new school is dramatically different from the old school,



To Purchase Call (703) 698-7750