



Moving with Children

One in five families move every year. Many of these families are “old hands” at relocating. Others will be moving this year for the first time. In either case, one aspect of moving that’s frequently overlooked is the effect moving has on children. Here are some ideas to help make moving as stress-free as possible for your family.

Be Positive about the Move

Children are uniquely tuned into the emotions of their parents. If you view your move in a positive fashion, those around you will feel optimistic about their moving experience. However, if you view the moving process in a negative fashion, your children will most likely have the same reaction.

Discuss the Move with Your Children

You should never hide the fact that your family is moving from your children. Instead, talk openly and positively about it. Explain to your child, in words that they will understand, why you are moving, what their new home will be like, and how each of them contributes to making the move a smooth one. If they are comfortable and their normal routine is not disrupted too much, they won’t be overly concerned.

Encourage them to openly express how they feel about moving, and calm any fears that they may have. Discuss your own feelings. Make your children feel that they are a part of the process. You should attempt to include them in making the plans for the move and take them with you when you go house or apartment shopping. After all, the strength of your family plays a major part in determining how your children adapt to their new surrounding.

If your children have moved before, they may recall memories of feelings they experienced. If those feelings are not pleasant, your children may exhibit signs of depression, withdrawal or unruly behavior as moving day approaches. Watch for these signs and take whatever steps you can to reassure them. Let your children have as much say as possible on which room they will have in their new home and how they will decorate it. If this is your children’s first move, they may feel insecure about what to expect. Encourage young children to “play moving,” using dolls, boxes, a wagon, etc. Open and honest communication is the key to alleviating any fears they may have about moving.

How Different Age Levels May be Affected

Infants are the least affected by the moving process. However, pre-schoolers have the most difficult time. Their sense of identity relies on their parents, the family routine, and objects that are special to them. At this age, their greatest fear is being left behind. The temptation may be to send your pre-schoolers to a sitter; however, this will only increase their fear of abandonment. Get them involved in the process. Let them pack some of their special possessions. Never dispose of any of these items, no matter how old and tattered they may be.

Grade school-aged children have a more highly developed sense of self. Their developing sense of discovery will make the idea of moving exciting. The greatest concern of these children is how well they’ll fit into the neighborhood, school, etc.

A teenager’s social activities and friends normally overshadow the family as sources of identity. You should encourage them to discuss their concerns. Since it is important for teenagers to “fit in,” you should suggest ways for them to find out about their new home, school and neighborhood. The Internet may prove to be a big help.

To ease the adjustment to your new home, prepare a package (that you take with you instead of putting on the moving van) for each child, labeled with their name. The package should contain favorite toys, games or music, a change of clothes and snacks. In this way, there will be something familiar on hand from the moment of arrival.

When is the Best Time to Move?

It is a common myth that the best time to move children is in the summer. Since school is a primary source of new friends, moving during the school year allows children to go directly from one social situation to another. They will be the “new kids,” and classmates and teachers will pay more attention to them. Transferring a grade school child can be done with a minimum of academic problems. High school courses vary more, which may cause some transitional difficulties. However, the transition would also be a problem with a summertime move.