

Helping your kids through the move

Five tips to help the kids

With countless details of moving on your mind, it can be all too easy to forget your children's feelings. Even though you're probably overwhelmed (understandably), it's important to give your kids some extra emotional support to help them through the trauma of moving. Inside are some simple strategies that can make the event easier on the kids in your family.

1. Talk about moving.

Open communication is key. Explain why and when you're moving. If possible, let the kids go along on house hunting trips. Take them for a visit to their new school. Show them playgrounds, parks and recreational activities. If you can't take the kids along, photos and video of where they'll live and play can be an excellent substitute.

2. Be enthusiastic.

If you show happiness about moving, your kids will mirror your mood. Keep a positive attitude, but be prepared to accept their negative reactions. Listen to children's fears and concerns, and share your own. Let them know their feelings are normal. Reassure them by reading age-appropriate books on moving.

3. Let the kids pack their stuff and plan their new room.

To small children, their possessions are their world. Reassure them that their possessions will move along with them. Have the children pack as much as possible. Give them special boxes and labels, and explain to them that all the things they packed will be in their new room when the family arrives. Talk about where they'll put their things, and let them take part in decorating their room.

4. Get ready for goodbye.

Help your children prepare for the move by making a memory book. (Or, let them shoot their own video.) Include pictures of their old house, friends and favorite places. Write down addresses and phone numbers of friends. Plan a going-away party and hand out cards with your new address. If visits are possible, let your children know they'll be able to visit their old friends.

5. Settle comfortably in your new home.

Help your kids feel at home before they feel homesick. Set up their rooms right away. Try to keep schedules as normal as possible, and be there to talk at mealtimes and bedtime. Call neighbors to find other children the same age. Sign up for one or two activities that will interest your children and help them meet new friends. Give lots of encouragement when kids tell you about their school experiences. Remember to set aside family time.

Relax!

Your kids will eventually forgive you for moving. Remember that behavioral changes will likely disappear as children adapt to their new environment. Don't be afraid to get professional help, however, if you feel it's necessary. The stress of moving isn't easy for

parents, but with patience and enthusiasm, you'll be rewarded with children who feel safe, happy and secure in their new home.

Easing newschool jitters

Find out as much as you can about the school before you move. Be informed about special needs, gifted programs, magnet school programs, and other school opportunities.

- Register before school starts so you can clear up any curriculum problems.
- If you move during the school year, check frequently with teachers to make sure your kids are adjusting well and are in the appropriate grade levels.
- For good social adjustment, ask teachers about "buddy" programs. Also, try to find neighborhood classmates your children can talk to about their new school.