



When Children Must Move to a New School

Volume 1, Issue 11

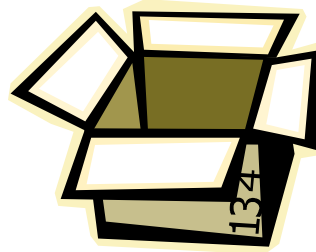
June, 2009

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Prepare to Move

If the current statistics are correct, 50% of us will move every five years (Theparentreport.com, 2009). Adults often find a new move disruptive but exciting as it is often associated with a new job or a job promotion. The challenge of finding a new home may be exhausting but enjoyable nonetheless. For children, who have established routines and friendships, a move may conjure feelings of resentment as it was not “their” decision to relocate. If a move follows a recent death or divorce, emotions may be at a higher level as your child not only attempts to juggle a change in family, but a change in environment as well.

Children, and often teenagers, do not readily grasp a change for financial security or for the betterment of the entire family. “Involving kids in the planning as much as possible make them feel like participants in the process” (KidsHealth, 2009). It’s important for parents to listen to concerns and to answer as openly and as honestly as possible. If a child proclaims, “I will never make friends again,” answer truthfully by stating, “It may be hard to make friends at first but give it a little time and it will happen.” Over-enthusiastic replies may sound to older children, especially teenagers, as dismissive.



Good things can come from a move!

Adjustment comes easier for some than others so it’s important to set realistic goals. “Generally, teachers expect new kids to feel somewhat comfortable in their classes in about 6 weeks”

(KidsHealth, 2009). If your child is still having difficulty after six weeks, contact your child’s school counselor or teacher.

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *Grab some popcorn and watch a movie!*
- ♦ *Survival hints for the first day at a new school.*
- ♦ *When a move involves teenagers.*
- ♦ *Taking memories with you.*
- ♦ *Creating a special box for the big moving day.*

Before You Begin Packing

Some of the most memorable events in our lives come with varied emotions: excitement, fear, happiness, sadness, feelings of renewal and sometimes loss. Moving is often a change that impacts our emotions on many levels. We may be excited about a new location but fear getting to know new people or not

meeting anyone we like as much as the people in our lives right now. We may be happy about moving to a new home but will miss the one we are leaving. Change often has multiple facets and while not easy, it is a part of life.

Children often sense a move before adults make

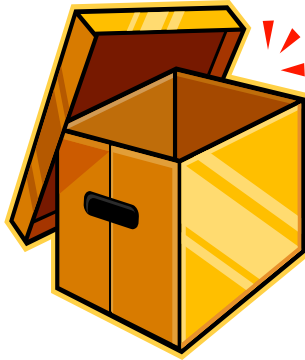
a final decision. Divorce, death or a change in job status may be topics that a child has overheard and children often draw their own conclusions. To avoid unnecessary worries or fears, begin discussing the possibility of a move as soon as you can.

(continued on page 2)

Before You Begin Packing (continued)

“Nothing is more unnerving than having your world upturned without warning, so be sure to prepare your kids before you start packing boxes”

(Movingguru.com, 2009).



“Let’s face it, moving is hard for the whole family.”

(Movingguru.com, 2009)

If possible, have pictures available for your child to view when you announce a move is in store. The internet is a

wonderful tool as students can explore pictures of the unfamiliar town or state, school building or take a virtual tour of their new home. Read and explore together, answering questions as openly and honestly as possible. The more opportunity your child has to adjust to the idea of moving, the easier it will be for him to voice concerns and give suggestions. If your child feels she is an important part

of the moving process, she is more likely to buy-in to the move.

Remember: Even if your child is initially excited, there will be periods of time when your child seems forlorn and bothered. It takes time to adjust!

It’s Show Time!

By the time children are in upper elementary, they often have a wide selection of movie titles they have seen. Ask your child to recall a movie character who was moving or who had just moved to a new location. Are there any movie characters who met new people?

In *Because of Winn-Dixie*, Opal meets new people after she visits a pet store, library and unfamiliar home. How was Opal able to estab-

“Little by little, you’ll make friends and feel at home in your new town.”
(KidsHealth, 2009)

lish new friendships? Winn-Dixie helped but do you need a pet to meet new people? How does one act when meeting people for the first time?

In *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Un-*

fortunate Events, three siblings must endure *over-the-top* challenges but still manage to find happiness and adjust in the end.

As an added challenge, ask your child to create two lists. One will be titled “Unfortunate Events.” The word *moving* may be first on the list! The second list will be titled “Fortunate Events” as fortunate things are bound to happen with a move.

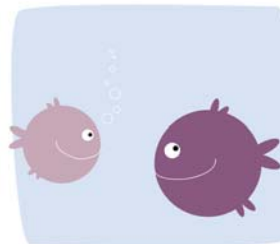
Adjusting to a New School

Being new is tough! Before your child introduces themselves for the first time, here are some helpful reminders:

1. **Introduce yourself!** If you appear to be friendly and out-going, others will gravitate towards you.
2. **Give it a shot!** It’s hard to make new friends when you so desperately miss the ones you left behind

but give it try. Your old friends want you to be happy; your potential new friends may understand more than you know how it feels to move.

3. **Just smile!** Be approachable. If you act depressed or shy and look down, others will



“Settling in might take a little while.”
(KidsHealth, 2009)

think you are not interested in making new friends.

4. **Sign up!** Join an extracurricular activity or sport’s team. The sooner you get involved, the sooner you’ll meet people and make new friends.

A Promise for the Future

A move for teenagers can be especially challenging as they have friendships that may have been established since elementary school, have “probably invested considerable energy in a particular social group and may be involved in a romantic relationship”

(KidsHealth, 2009). It is common for a teenager to be angry or rebel when asked to move from familiar, comfortable surroundings.



Make new friends but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold.

Although change after graduation is expected, teenagers often look forward to high school milestones – homecoming, prom and even “senior day.” If a move is made during the school year, ask school administrators if it would be possible for your child to return for important upcoming dates. Your teenager will know that you understand the feelings she is

experiencing while also giving her the opportunity to look forward to something in the interim. The

“impossible” seems possible when we have something to look forward to.

If feasible, promise to visit the area again so that your teenager can hang out with his friends. Time crawls when we are initially looking forward to something but with added weeks and months, your teenager will soon find a new set of friends that he enjoys just as much as those he left behind. Moving is an opportunity for young people to value the relationships along the way – after all, life is a *journey!*

Saying Goodbye

It’s difficult to say goodbye to good friends and loving family but while goodbye may be hard, it’s not “final.” Saying goodbye can offer closure so allow your child to have a going-away party with close school friends. A separate party may be held for a sports team or a youth group. Consider printing pertinent information on a card to encourage everyone to stay in touch. Remember to include your new physical address, telephone number, and

email address as a reminder that distance is only a click of a mouse or postage stamp away (About.com, 2009).

If you are hosting a party, ask everyone to write down a favorite memory about your child. When finished, they are to seal their card in a pre-stamped, addressed envelope. Ask a neighbor or friend to mail the cards sporadically within the next

“If you have a camera, take lots of pictures of your friends, favorite places, and your neighborhood.”
(KidsHealth, 2009)

month or two so your child receives mail at the new location. In your child’s room, find a place where the cards can be displayed and remembered.

The Important “Stuff”

Packing is much easier than unpacking. It can take weeks, even months, to open taped boxes. Before you pack, ask your child to create a bag for several nights. Aside from clothes, he may want to take an I-pod, music, or games. Journals, pictures, and a favorite stuffed animal may be something she wants to pack for those first few nights away from “home.”

If you are limited to what your child can carry, create an “important box” that has your child’s name on it. This can be one of the first boxes opened upon arrival.

As soon as it is possible, set up your child’s room so they feel “at home” in



Keep “comfort” items close at hand.

their new space. For younger children, arrange their room like that of their previous until they are comfortable. The more familiar your child’s surroundings, the sooner they’ll claim the space as their own.

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June Q&A

Q: What kind of questions do kids typically ask when they are told they are moving?

Why or how come? Can we take our pets? Can we come back to visit? Will I be able to make new friends? Will I like the next school? What if my teacher does not like me? What if the students at the new school think I'm a dork? What if I'm picked on? What if I'm behind the other students in school work?

The possibilities are endless but questions routinely revolve around *their* world and *their* feelings. Before sitting your child down with the news that you are moving, have as many answers as possible. The more details you can give, the more assured your child will be. "Being honest and open will help your child feel confident in this decision to move" (About.com, 2009). If you have pictures of the new town, neighborhood or house, this helps your child envision the future with specific knowledge. If there are any decisions where your child can have control, he will feel more likely part of the move (ex. bedroom arrangement). The more "planned out" the decision seems to be, the more likely your child will accept the circumstances.

Resources:

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