

# Moving With Children



*One in five families moves every year. Many of these families are “old hands” at relocating. Others will be moving for the first time. In either case, the effect moving has on children is often either overlooked or minimized. Here are some ideas to help reduce the stress associated with a move for your family.*

## **Be Positive about the Move**

At any age, children are uniquely tuned into the emotions of their parents. If you are positive about your move, your children will likely feel optimistic about their moving experience and look forward to it with excitement. Conversely, should you feel sad or negative about the move, they will likely feel the same.

## **Discuss the Move with Your Children**

Include your children in the planning of the move from the very beginning. Talk openly and positively about the move. 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.

Children have big imaginations which can lead to fears. Encourage them to express how they feel about moving and calm any fears that they may have. Discuss your own feelings. Let your children know they are a part of the process. 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 family adapts to their new surroundings.

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 rooms 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-school age children have the most difficult time. They rely on

their parents, the family routine, and objects that are special to them to provide security. At this age, their greatest fear is being left behind. You may be tempted to send your pre-school age children to a sitter, but this might increase their fear of abandonment. Get them involved in the process. 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 for 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 for identity. As hard as it can be with teens, encourage them to discuss their concerns. Since it is important for teenagers to “fit in,” 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. Include favorite toys, games, music, a change of clothes, and snacks and put the package on each child's bed or in their room upon 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. While some students don't like being the “new kid,” classmates and teachers will give them an opportunity to make friends and begin the process of fitting in to their new life.

Transferring a grade school child can be done with a minimum of academic challenges. High school courses vary more, which may cause some transitional difficulties. This can be overcome by contacting the school in advance of the move and getting to know the new curriculum. Teachers at both schools can help to manage this transition.