

IS YOUR FAMILY MOVING?

Helping Your Child with this Transition

Children are very perceptive and often understand that changes are planned even before you tell them. So it is wise to start talking with your child about the move as soon as possible. This will help make sure that she has a little time to process the idea, make plans and preparations, as well as think of how to say goodbye to her friends and classmates.

1. **Use books.** There are some lovely books for children about moving that will help start conversations. The *Berenstain Bears' Moving Day* is just one. Reading a book will help you and your child use emotion words to describe what you are feeling about the upcoming move. It is important to acknowledge that people can have many different emotions all at the same time, so you and your child can be scared, anxious, excited, anticipating, as well as sad as you think about your move. There is often a real sense of "loss" involved with moving – and it is helpful for everyone to acknowledge the grief as well as the excitement surrounding a move.

2. **Let your child help.** You can let your child decide which items are so special that they will be carried with you, versus those that will be packed. She can also decorate the boxes that have her things in them so her items can be easily recognized. If you are packing boxes into a moving van, consider having your child's boxes placed into the van last – so they will be the first boxes removed when you are at your new home.

3. **Decide how to say goodbye.** Your child can make a book about his friends. Take photographs of your child's friends and have them tell him something funny or special that you can include in the book. Or, you can have your child tell you something special about each person or something fun they did together, and place into a book that she can take with her. (There are many ways on-line to make hardback books fairly cheaply – i.e. Blurb, Shutterfly) Older children may appreciate having phone numbers included so they can stay in touch with their friends.

You can also have some conversations about how she might say goodbye to different people – i.e. make something for them or draw a picture for them. Some people have a little farewell party.

4. **Allow choices.** Your child will probably feel as if things are "out of control" since there will be a move to a new home, new school, new friends. Your child may act out and have emotional swings as he wonders what his new life will be like. It will be helpful if you allow your child to make many different choices about things that don't matter so she feels as if she has come control over her life. "Would you like to wear your green sweater or your blue sweater today?" "Would you like soup or sandwich for lunch?"

5. **Maintain routines.** Whenever there is going to be a change in your child's life, it is helpful to maintain some routines. This helps your child feel some stability, knowing that some of the normal routines are staying the same. Maybe you can continue the same night-time routines, singing the same songs as you drive to school, or having the same breakfast. Anything you can do to keep the routines the same will help your child make the transition to a new home. Please don't ask your child to accomplish new tasks during this time of transition. For instance, don't ask him to stop using a bottle, begin toilet training, or move to a different bed when there are other changes happening.

When you arrive at your new home, remember that it will take time for everyone in the family to feel settled and secure. We hope you enjoy your new home!

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