

### Moving With Children

Moving house can be an emotional experience for adults, so imagine how much more unsettling it can be for children who don't really understand what's going on.

There are many things to consider when relocating, none more important than the impact of moving on your children.

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**REMAIN POSITIVE:**

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The secret is to remain positive.

Most often the reason for moving is a happy one, such as a new home or job promotion, which generates excitement and compensates for the inconvenience of packing up and relocating.

However if the move is associated with an unhappy event it can be hard to keep a positive attitude in front of the children.

Children feed of the emotions of their parents.

If you are not happy the chances are they are not happy either and will need more reassurance and attention to ensure the move is a positive experience for all of you.

### **TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN:**

Explain to your children what's happening, why you are moving, where you are moving to and what they can do to help so that they feel a part of what's happening.

#### **Listen to them.**

Let them express how they are feeling, and empathise with them, even if some of their feelings are negative.

It is only natural they will be concerned, leaving familiar surroundings and friends.

Leaving the known for the unknown can be pretty scary.

Most importantly be **honest** with your children.

Reassure them that they are an important part of the family, and can help make the move a positive family experience.

### **TEARS AND TANTRUMS:**

Children express their anxiety in a number of ways.

Tears and tantrums are the most common. If your children have moved before, and the experience was not a happy one, they may show signs of depression, withdrawn behaviour, or signs of aggression such as tantrums.

Once again, the answer is lots of reassurance and a positive attitude.

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## **THE AGE DIFFERENCE:**

Different aged children react differently to news of an impending move:

### **Infants:**

Very young children will be affected least, providing their normal routine is not disrupted greatly.

### **Pre-Schoolers:**

Children of this age worry about being left behind. Especially when they see their favourite toys being packed and put away, and their parent's attention being diverted from them and their normal home routine.

Instead of getting them out of the way by sending them off to Nanas or a baby-sitter, let them stay with you and help you pack up their possessions and toys.

Never throw out any of these prior to the move, regardless of their condition as having familiar things around is of great comfort to young children.

### **Primary School Children:**

Children of this age look forward to discovering the world around them.

Therefore relocating is generally exciting to them, with lots of new experiences and making new friends generally comes easily to children in this age group.

Their main concern is fitting in to their new school.

### **Teenagers:**

Deep vital friendships are very important to older children.

By this age social activities and friends have overshadowed the family as sources of identity.

Talk to them openly and frankly about the move. If they're interested in sports or activities, help them find clubs and organisations in the new area. If practical, encourage them to invite friends to visit or stay overnight at your new address.

Forget about whether your home is not as presentable as you would like - your children's happiness is priority at this stage.

## **TIMING - PITFALLS & MYTHS**

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Although it may seem more convenient to relocate during school holidays, experience shows that this timing can be more upsetting for children.

School is a major source for making friends.

So if you move during the annual school holidays, your children will be placed in new surroundings at a time when the opportunity to make new friends is at a minimum.

Come the first day of school in the New Year, they will enter the class as a stranger - a new student who may not be recognised as such by a teacher facing a new class for the year.

On the other hand, a move during the school year would allow your children to go directly from one group of friends to another.

Transferring from one primary school to another is relatively easy, as the curriculum is fairly flexible.

Transferring from one secondary school to another may cause some transitional problems as the curricula is more structured and can change from state to state.

Therefore, do consider the social problems that will almost certainly result from a move during the annual school holidays.

### **USEFUL TIPS:**

Here are some useful tips to make your move a happy one.

### **BEFORE THE MOVE:**

Involve the children.

If possible take them with you when you go house hunting.

Do some research?

Get your children excited about where they're going?

Find out about the history and attractions of the area you are going to.

Allow them to give you ideas of how they will want their new rooms to be decorated.

Make time to visit favourite places and people.

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Give them a small address book and encourage them to exchange addresses and phone numbers with their friends.

Extend invitations to their friends to come and stay once you are settled in your new house.

Caution your children if you are moving to a radically different environment, such as moving from the city to the country or vice-versa.

The more they know what to expect the more confident and optimistic they will be.

### **ON THE DAY:**

**Moving Treats** - Pack a few of your children's favourite toys, books and snacks to enjoy during the move.

**Safety First** - Check your own home for potential accident producers, such as loose steps, builder's rubble, dangerous areas such as unfenced pools and unlocked gates.

**Time Out** - Don't try to get everything done the minute you arrive. As soon as the major unpacking is done, take a break with the family.

Packing a picnic for this purpose before you leave is a great way to unwind for a while with your children.

### **AFTER THE MOVE:**

**Time In** - Spend as much time with your children as you can, and let them tell you everything about their new school and friends

Some children may not find it easy to begin with.

Follow their progress closely, and if you detect any concerns that do not fade away, do not hesitate to visit their teacher.

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You may find it a good idea to accompany them to school for the first few days.

Be aware of the signs - Younger children may revert to baby behaviour. Be reassuring rather than scolding and they should soon revert to normal behaviour.

Consult your doctor if any unusual behaviour continues, such as loss of appetite, insomnia, and constipation.

And advise your doctor that you have recently moved house