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HOW TO HELP KIDS TRANSITION WHEN MOVING TO A NEW HOME

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Abstract

The decision is now final. You've accepted the promotion and narrowed down the list of potential new homes, and you'll be moving soon. Now comes the hardest part -- planning the move and telling the kids. Whether moving out of state or just around the block, children and adolescents typically aren't thrilled by such an event. In fact, they rarely relish change of this magnitude. Fortunately, there are some steps you can take to ease the transition. Your attitude about moving and your willingness to let your children share in the experience will influence their feelings. Try these below tips to make the move as anxiety-free as possible.



Getting Started

An estimated 13% of Aussies move every year. If you are one of them, you know what a pain it can be. Between packing, traveling, and sorting through the endless sea of boxes, moving to a new home is pretty stressful.

The moving process also can cause a number of challenges for youngsters. Not only are they leaving behind their home, school, and friends, but they are also forced outside of their comfort zone, causing them to become understandably stressed or scared. So, how can you help them make the big transition?

Here, with the help of experts, we will take a closer look at the reasons children struggle with moving and what you can do to make the process a little easier.

I. Why Is Moving So Hard on Kids?

Whether you are relocating 10 blocks away or 10 states away, there is an exhaustive list of things to do before the moving truck arrives—especially when you have kids involved. But helping your kids adjust should be at the top of that to-do list.



For children, moving is a sudden and difficult disruption of normalcy. The life they have become so accustomed to is taken away, which creates a lot of confusion in their young minds. It also can be hard for them to grasp the reality of what is going on, which inevitably creates problems.

Factors That Impact Children

- Changing schools
- Moving because of divorce
- Leaving friends
- Disruption in routine
- Adjusting to a new area

Along these same lines, psychiatrist and mother of three, Carly Snyder, MD, who is the director of women's health for Family Health Associates, points out that children also struggle to understand the reasons behind the move.

"Unlike adults, who likely chose their new location and home or at least understand the reasons for the move (like a new job, more space, or safer area), kids don't have a say in where they live or appreciate the necessity," she says.

Moving and Depression in Children

Unfortunately, there are times when moving can cause depression in young children, especially those with a past mental illness. In fact, the stress of a move can trigger symptoms like unexplained crying, sleeping issues, headaches, and stomachaches.

You might also notice that your kids withdraw from friends and family, cling to you, lose interest in things they used to enjoy, and suffer academically. They may even express thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

Moving Is Tough For Kids And Can Potentially Impact Their Mental Health: Here's How You Can Make It Easier For Them



- While moving can be a positive experience for a family, it often has some negative implications for the children involved.
- Moving has the most profound impact on kids over the age of 5, as it's particularly difficult for them to leave behind friends and adjust in a new school during this important time of development.

- Ultimately, it's important that parents provide their children with a secure and stable environment, and do what they can to make the move easier on them.
- The first step in making this move easier on your kids is keeping them informed: don't leave them in the dark, but be honest about what is changing and when.
- Also, assist them in making a treasure chest and a memory box: the former should be filled with their favorite things and the latter with phone numbers and addresses of close friends and family.
- Finally, make sure they say their proper goodbyes to their home and have plenty of time to do so.



Moving to a new city can serve as a positive change for your life, which might explain why so many do make that move: as up to 63% of Americans have moved to a new place at least once, compared to the 37% who've never left their hometowns. That said, moving to a new place can have its challenges too, especially for kids. In fact, moving during childhood can have a major impact on your child's mental health.

The Impact of Moving on Your Child's Mental Health

Kids who have moved five or more times during their childhood are three times as likely to experience mental health problems compared to those who stay in their hometowns. In a study of 50,000 children, researchers found that the impact of moving is often worse for children over the age of five.

This is because they have to leave behind friends and change schools during an important time of social development.

Healthy child development is best supported by security and stability across different domains in the child's life. Key components of that stability include housing, parenting, family dynamics, neighborhood factors, peer influences, and school development. Children with unstable housing often have fewer high-quality relationships, lower life satisfaction, and a lower sense of personal well-being.

"Moving house can be a hugely stressful experience for the parents and the family as a whole as it can be associated with change in social environment," said Foteini Tseliou, lead author of the study. "Parents need to be aware that such a change can be even more stressful for children as they may be more sensitive and less resilient."

II. How to Talk to Your Kids About Moving

Before you start packing, it is helpful to have a thorough discussion with your children about moving. The key is to be open, honest, and direct and give them opportunities to share their thoughts, feelings, and apprehensions.



"Whether they really liked their bedroom or they loved having friends who lived close by, it's healthy to talk about all the things they're going to miss,"

says Morin. "But it's also important to talk about all the things they have to look forward to about moving."

You also want to address the mixed emotions they may be experiencing. They may be excited about the possibilities that the move brings, but also apprehensive about being the new kid or trying to make new friends.

"Reinforce that it's OK to have a myriad of emotions about a move, from excitement to fear, anger and disappointment," says Dr. Snyder. "Encourage a child to verbalize their feelings and, as adults, it's best to respond by asking more [questions] rather than quickly placating or minimizing their fears."

If moving is one of the top five most stressful events for adults, it's fair to assume it is similarly difficult for kids.

— CARLY SNYDER, MD

Along with helping your kids manage their stress, it is also important to manage your own. One of the biggest struggles kids and teens face when moving is trying to manage their own transitions while also picking up on their parents' stress levels, says Dr. Rebecca Mannis, Ivy-Prep school founder and learning specialist with expertise in pediatric neuropsychology.

Bottom line? Try and keep it together. Although this is sometimes easier said than done, it is important nonetheless.

"If moving is one of the top five most stressful events for adults, it's fair to assume it is similarly difficult for kids," says Dr. Snyder.

III. Tips for Helping Children Adjust To Moving

It is only natural for a child to feel sad about leaving their home. That said, there are some enjoyable ways to help your kids adjust before and after you are all settled in. Here are some creative ways you can help your kids adjust to moving.

Before the Move

Once you have had the conversation about moving, you can start preparing for the big day. For instance, you could find ways to honor the home you are leaving by taking pictures or videos or even having a going away party.

"That may mean making a scrapbook or it could involve creating a video of them saying goodbye to each room," says Morin.

You also could visit your new community—and maybe even your new home—before you move. Dr. Snyder suggests searching for some fun new restaurants, stores, and activities in the area that your child may be excited about.



"Walk around and get a feeling for the new neighborhood," she says.

While you are there, see if you can find parents from your child's new class at school, and set up a play date for when you arrive. This way, your child will have at least one familiar face on the first day.

You also can reassure your kids that they can see their old neighborhood again by planning a return trip to your old stomping grounds. Your child will have something to look forward to after the big move, and they won't be saying "goodbye" to friends, but rather "see you later."

Most importantly, make sure your child understands the entire moving process from beginning to end, Morin says.

"Tell them what to expect each step along the way," she says. "Explain how you'll be packing, who is moving their stuff, and what will happen at their new place."

After the Move

Once the moving truck is empty and your new living room is piled high with boxes, you may want to focus on getting settled. But instead of just focusing on the work that needs to be done, try to do things that help your kids ease into their new environment. For instance, you could plan something special for your first night in your new home.



"Celebrate being there even if it means ordering in and having a picnic on the floor," says Morin.

You also should frequently check in with your kids. Ask them how things are going after a big move and allow them to be negative if they need to be, says Dr. Snyder.

"It's OK if they're not immediately happy or comfortable in the new house and school—give it time," she says. "Trying to force the positive will likely backfire. Instead, commiserate if appropriate and then talk about ways to make the new place better."

You also can assist with the transition by keeping in touch with loved ones back home, which is vital for helping children adjust. Dr. Mannis suggests Zoom ice cream parties or bedtime stories and sending drawings or pictures. Even writing letters and sharing photos can be a fun way to stay connected.

Celebrate being there even if it means ordering in and having a picnic on the floor.

— *AMY MORIN, LCSW*

And, if you notice that your child is struggling with adjusting to their new environment, make sure you make note of it. You can share your concerns with a healthcare provider and together come up with a plan for helping your child manage the transition.

"Keep a pad handy to jot down some of your observations or concerns, and contact a specialist if you feel your child is showing signs of significant changes in their learning, sleep patterns, or other aspects of resilience," she says.

How To Make Your New House Kid-Friendly?

Moving to a new home is fun and exciting for adults but daunting, mentally exhausting and stressful for kids. It is difficult for them to leave a place of comfort, mates and familiar neighbours.



Therefore, commonly children experience relocation stress that causes them to withdraw, throw tantrums, become irritable and exhibit uncharacteristic behaviour. You must spend a lot of time with them when moving, which is possible by hiring professional removalists in Adelaide. Take the assistance

of professionals for managing some or all aspects of your move to support your family members through the tough transition period. Additionally, follow these tips by experts to make your new house kid-friendly.

- **Dedicate A Wall As A Creative Canvas**

Provide an outlet for your children's creativity and energy by dedicating one wall in their room as a canvas for painting, writing or doodling. Install a big whiteboard on the wall with a small chalkboard for them expressive through visual creations. This step is especially helpful when you have small children and want to make the house attractive and fun for them.

- **Baby-Proof Immediately**

Focus on baby-proofing the entire house besides unpacking upon arrival at the new home. Apply the round corners, straps, clamps and other safety tools on countertops, windows, drawers, and other areas. It will help keep your child from hurting themselves accidentally or opening storage units with food, grains, drinks etc.

Do this activity once before placing the home décor items, then after you setting up furniture. Baby proofing is crucial for homes with toddlers, and you must do it while your hired removalists in Adelaide move and unpack your belongings at the new home.

- **Get Suitable Furniture**

A house move presents you with the opportunity to change furniture. You can donate or resell old furniture with sharp edges, glass or other non-friendly features for children. Make sure to get rid of them before the move as it will reduce the packing and moving load for the removalists.

After you are at the new home, get new furniture with round edges, attached cushions etc., to have better-suited home décor for a growing family. While looking and selecting furniture, involve your kids in the moving process to make them feel more at home and connect with the new place sooner.

- **Make Sure The Walls Have Washable Paint**

Keeping walls free of spots, stains, smudges and marks is impossible when you have small children. Therefore, ensure all the walls in the kid's bedrooms and living rooms have washable paint that you can clean with microfiber cloths, soap and water.

Semi-gloss and glossy paint finishes are the most suitable for a home with kids as they are low maintenance and easy to clean. Additionally, kids like shiny things, which will make the walls more enticing for them than walls with flat or dull finishes.

- **Keep Entryways and Pathways Clear**

When settling in a new home, pathways and entry points are often cluttered with boxes and household items. Your children can trip, fall and meet with injury and accidents while playing, which is why you must keep these areas clear to make your home kid-friendly. Even while unpacking, make sure you do it in one room and keep children out of the way.

Additionally, use moving equipment like sliders, harnesses and straps to take heavy and bulky items from one place to another without increasing the risk of household items and furniture toppling. Ask your removalists in Adelaide to unpack the moving boxes to speed the process of settling and keep entryways/pathways clear.

- **Be Practical About New Purchases**

Your new home can need many things to make it comfortable for your family or presentable for guests, but you should always remain practical about the purchases. Buying new furniture, home decor items, clothes, and other items must be done after considering space, necessity and urgency.

Don't make the mistake of getting expensive and complex toys as a bribe for children to get them to like the house. Instead, involve your children in the decision-making and selection process for things you really need like appliances, home décor, wall paints etc.

- **Add Colour To Kids' Rooms**

Your children's room should reflect their personality to make it more endearing for them. Therefore, if you are reluctant to experiment with the accent, dominant and complementary paint colour in living rooms, kitchen and bathroom, consider being creative with themes of your kid's space.

Show them a wide range of combinations and consult a professional painter to select the best colours for the walls of play areas or bedrooms of your kids. In addition, decorate the rooms with glow in the light stickers, family pictures, hangings, fun wallpapers etc.

Moving is challenging for most children, as it is harder to deal with separation anxiety and relocation stress. Therefore, make them look forward to moving into the new home by following the tips shared above. Hire professional removalists in Adelaide to manage packing and moving to give you more time, energy and bandwidth to make your new house kid-friendly.

IV. Essential Tips to Help Kids Settle Into a New School

Moving to a new school is usually the hardest part of a move for kids. Switching schools means making new friends, getting to know new teachers, settling into a new school and figuring out how to navigate their way through a new system. It is particularly difficult for teens.



- **Visit the School First**

If possible, before the first day of school begins, take a tour of the school with your child. Often, school administrators will encourage you to do this and provide an opportunity for you and your child to ask questions. If you have a teen, they will probably want to visit the school on their own. If this is the case, ask the school to have another teen show them around, so they have a chance to meet someone who'll be in their class. Just encourage them to do so if the school permits it.

- **Make Sure They Know the Route to and From School**

If your child has to take transit or walk to school, make sure they know the route, the times that the bus picks them up and where, and how to get home. If possible, you might want to speak with the school administrator about carpools in your neighborhood or ask that your child to be partnered with another child so they can walk together. Just ensure that your child knows their home telephone number and their address, just in case. The school will also ask for the emergency contact number, too.

- **Host a Neighborhood Get-Together**

If you moved during school holidays, such as Christmas or summer break, it's a great idea to host a neighborhood get-together, especially if you know that there are children in your area who are close in age to your children which will give your child a chance to get to know kids in their neighborhood. It will make the transition to a new school easier and will give you peace of mind as well. A neighbor get-together also allows you to find out more about the local school, and to get acquainted with other parents.

- **Go With Your Child on the First Day**

If possible, accompany your child on their first day. It is an excellent opportunity to meet their teachers and can add a feeling of security. You can ask the teacher to assign a buddy to your child if such a system isn't already in place. Let the teacher know of any concerns or issues.

- **Pack a Special Lunch**

Leave special treats in their lunch bag. A note from you is always appreciated, too. Just try not to make them feel homesick, rather encouraged.

- **Talk to Them**

The first few weeks of school can be challenging. You might find that your child reacts differently than you may have expected. Make sure you take the time to talk to them about their experience and if they're adjusting to the new school. Watch for any signs that your child is not adjusting. Ask for one-on-one time with teachers, if needed.

- **Grades May Change**

Be aware that your child's grades could be affected by the move. Often, grades go down. It can be due to the change in curriculum, change in teaching styles or simply that they need time to adjust.

- **Encourage Their Involvement**

Help your child find clubs and activities they'll want to attend either through school, a community center or a local church.



- **Encourage Sleep-Overs and Play-Dates**

Ask your child about new friends, then call their parents and invite them over for an afternoon or evening. Or volunteer to drive them to the mall or a movie.

- **Remember, It's Going to Take Time**

Adjusting to a new home, new school and new friends will take some time. Give your child the chance to feel comfortable in their new space. It may even take a few months before things settle. Allow your child (and yourself) that time. And before you know it, you'll all be feeling a lot more at home.

The Final Words

Simply put, starting over in a new place is tough and every child adapts to this change in different ways. So, if your child takes time to adjust, that is OK. No matter how long it takes, it is important to remain patient, supportive, and proactive in finding the best ways to help them cope.

Focus on spending time together and checking in on how things are going every day. And, if you feel your child is not adapting well, reach out to a healthcare provider and share your concerns. Together you can come up with a plan that addresses your child's specific needs.

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