



RELOCATING WITH CHILDREN

More often than not relocation is viewed merely as a physical move from one place to another to set up a new house. We tend to forget the psychological impact of uprooting from a familiar surrounding we called home and moving into an unknown country and culture. As adults we might have a rational approach towards it but the young ones have a very different interpretation. At times they might be very apprehensive and worried, confused or even totally against it.

As parents we have to address their emotions and help sort it out. Most times their feelings are a reflection of the family mood, ...So even if a move is associated with certain not so positive factors for you try not to highlight them at home. Let the children first see the brighter aspects and gradually come to know of the few shortcomings.

Tips for coping...

- Let the children know about the move as soon as the decision is made. They have to realize there is no going back on the decision but they all shall be participating in the relocation and taking up certain responsibilities.
- When moving to a new country try and give the children as much relevant information as possible, about the society, people, culture and food. Show them pictures and maps.

Excite a child's imagination it can overpower apprehensions!

- If the move will improve the family's financial situation let the children know that the move will open up greater opportunities.

Once you have explained to them about the reasons for the move, give sometime for them to think it over...now be ready for them to come back and discuss their own little problems.

Address all their issues, fears and queries. Explain to each child at their level of understanding the necessity for the move the benefits and the changes they need to face. It is good to be honest and necessary to have an optimistic attitude. If they have had unpleasant experiences in previous moves assure them all measures will be taken to avoid the same problems this time. If it is a first move they will need a lot of help, reassurances and a secured feeling to be able to break away from their current little world and to have the courage to enter a new one. Their lack of understanding may at times be expressed in behavioral problems such as temper tantrums, mood swings lack of appetite, disturbed sleep and most important for the 4 to 6 year olds tummy pains...be patient, divert their attentions by involving them in the move. Allow them to sort their belongings, clean up, and do some packing. Give away things to charity. Make them feel important. Discuss the new house, their rooms and how they would like to dress it up.

Age is a factor! How old are they?

Infants and toddlers are least affected. They just need to be comfortable and they will not even really notice the move. Children below the age of six need to be handled carefully. They can feel very insecure, because their identity is associated to the parents, a few belongings and the house or their room. Let them be around when

things are packed. It is a good idea for them to do some packing of their favorite belongings in a kid box. Do not send them away and try to talk to them about all the new things that they can see and do.

The grade school children might react differently. While they will be excited about a move especially if to a foreign country, they will have misgivings about moving away from friends, school and neighborhood. Explain to them that they can still maintain friendships, and that they can come back to visit friends and family left behind. Let them organize their farewell parties, take lots of photographs, exchange addresses and let it be real fun affair! Before leaving take them around their favourite spots. But try not to let things become too nostalgic!!!

Teenagers will need a lot of special consideration and support no matter how independent they want to be. Talk to them and find out what is the main concern. Make a special effort to see what opportunities the new place has in terms of their interest. Encourage them to find out for independently about clubs, organizations, and sporting facilities in the new destination. Check out if new school curriculums match with their old one and if any catching up is necessary. This will allow them to fit in smoothly to the new environment. Brief them about the socio-cultural atmosphere so that they are assured they can fit into the trends and styles.

Time your move correctly.

With pre-schoolers and grade school children it is often easier to move during the school term and not during the summer holidays. During the holidays when children move into a new surrounding it is very difficult to find new friends especially with schools closed. Often there is not much to keep them occupied, which can make them





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homesick for what was left behind. If you are moving during the school year you can bring them from one structured setting into another. They are taken up into the new school life and the prospects of building up a new social structure is easier.

With teenagers it is probably advisable to move in the summer to coincide with the educational patterns and to prevent them from having to catch up in their new school. If it is a summer move be sure to investigate the possibilities of summer jobs or summer camps to enable them to socialize and remain occupied.

No matter how desirable and profitable the move is it will undoubtedly have its share of stress and fatigue for every member of the family. There will always be some misgivings in leaving behind the old home, friends, family and colleagues. Children have their own interpretations and no matter what we do and how well we prepare they are unable to react as rationally as we would expect. To make the move smooth and settling down easy it's good to consider the following:

- Involve the entire family in the move. Let the children be a part of choosing your new house, buying new furniture, curtains doing up the children's rooms. This enables them to immediately attach and relate to the new surroundings.
- Help the children to establish new relationships but also encourage them to be in touch with close friends left behind. They can call, send mails, exchange photographs and so on. This helps them to bond with the people around them.
- Along with all the hustle-bustle of unpacking and settling try and go out with the family. Even if just for a picnic or a long walk or a bike ride. It will release you of all the tensions and allow some relaxing moments. And most important the family will have an opportunity to spend quality time together and to talk about their new life in a new country. Let the family be close and united.
- Take keen interest in their new school, class and friends. Help them with the slightest problems, social or cultural. Talk to the

teachers. As soon as a child settles in a school he starts building his new world and settling in it.

The art of parenthood is in being able to see your child's world through his eyes and the success of parenthood lies in patience.



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CHILDREN & MOVING

