



So you want to know more about...

Moving

An Unsettling Experience

Moving with kids is a whole different ballgame! Besides the usual headaches of house or apartment shopping, paperwork, dealing with utilities, packing and unpacking, not to mention your own emotional issues...you have the little ones to think about. Moving to a new house will rock their world, so to speak. How can you ever manage it all?

Planning will make a big difference. You can't control feelings, but you can control timing, setting, and other variables to reduce as many potential trip-ups as possible. Try to include your

child in the process from the very beginning. Have them look at houses you are considering. This is their house, too! Talk about the benefits of the new house as opposed to your old. Help them remember the old house with photos or other mementos.

Once you are ready to move, try to keep as many other things consistent as possible. If feasible, stay with your current caregiver, at least temporarily. It's your child's home away from home and a safe heaven from the ruckus. Having extra drive time for a few weeks is a relatively minor inconvenience.

Try not to vary your routines too much: sticking to bedtimes, bath times etc. will provide some stability during the transition. Of course, you *will* need to cut yourself more slack. Eat take-out food and let your housekeeping standards slide. Take time off work to get the house really settled before you get back to the old grind. The more time you take to "relax" with your family during the transition, the more you can all feel free to enjoy this exciting and eventually rewarding experience.

Teamwork

Here are ways to help your child to feel powerful during a move:

- Narrow the field, then let him house hunt with you.
- If feasible, let him choose his bedroom, the paint color, or where his furniture will go.
- Have him help you pack and unpack some of his belongings.
- Give him "to-do" lists on which he can check off his accomplishments.
- Immediately make the new home "his" by planting a flower or hanging a poster.

Once you've unpacked all those boxes, the real fun can begin! Before you recycle those boxes, why not have some fun with them? Each box emptied makes room for more fun. You can make: playhouses, hiding places, doll beds, tunnels, spaceships, and even sleds (on grassy hills)! A big, flattened box is a great canvas for a young artist. With some crayons and markers and a little imagination, they'll be occupied for hours!

Further reading

- *Berenstain Bears' Moving Day?*
by Stan & Jan Berenstain
- *A House is a House for Me,*
by MaryAnn Hoberman
- *Moving,* by Fred Rogers

Checklist for Success

- ☑ Have a goodbye party with neighborhood friends or babysitters. Arrange for them to come to an open house or unpacking party, as well.
- ☑ Pack your child's room last, and unpack it first.
- ☑ Arrange for childcare during the move, so that your child doesn't need your attention during the most hectic times.
- ☑ If you will be painting or remodeling your new house before moving in, let your child help in some small way, if practical. This will give him a sense of ownership.
- ☑ If you take time off work to unpack, give your child some slack by dropping off at childcare later and picking up earlier, but try not to disrupt his entire routine. He will have more fun at childcare and you will be more effective at home.
- ☑ Pack and label boxes according to how quickly you'll need to get in to them after the move. This will help you prioritize when you feel overwhelmed.
- ☑ Don't forget to get plenty of fresh air and exercise during the transition. The same goes for your kids – it's a great stress-reliever!
- ☑ Inform your child's caregivers of your moving plans so they can help ease the transition at their end.

Regression

Despite all your efforts, moving is likely to be a somewhat stressful experience for your child. Children may regress to younger behaviors in response to the stress: a potty-trained toddler may have accidents, a preschooler may start thumb-sucking again, or you may note a general increase in whining and frustration.

A little TLC, for you and your child, is the best remedy. This doesn't mean lowering your standards for her capabilities, but there is no need to overreact to what are most likely temporary setbacks. Try to verbalize your child's feelings. She may never actually respond to what you say, but you will put her worried mind at ease. As for comfort objects, there is no harm

in bringing them out for a temporary fix. Perhaps you had been leaving her lovey at home during the day. Why not let it come in the car or even to the center for a short while? **Ask** your child what will make **her** feel better.

One caution: try to avoid projecting adult stressors—expenses, goodbyes to old friends, etc.—onto your young child. Children under the age of 3 or 4 can't understand the abstract effects of moving—their parents **are** their world.

Frequently Asked Questions

My child is having tantrums all the time. I just know it's about this move and I can't change that! Your child might be regressing, or she might be going through a normal developmental phase that you are associating with the move. In either case, a consistent but firm response is the best way to extinguish any unwanted behavior. Read our flyers on Tantrums and Power Struggles for more details.

My child is so sad about this move. Our new house is bigger and better, I don't understand all the melodrama. Sometimes children "overact" when they think we aren't getting the hint. Try clearly stating "I

can see you are really sad to say goodbye to this house." Think up a symbolic act to help mark the change, like bringing plantings with you.

It feels like we'll never be unpacked. Here's a great way to reduce the physical and mental clutter as you work to unpack: designate one room as the holding pen, and keep all unpacked boxes there, out of sight. Then set goals like "unpack 1 box per day." Celebrate your progress as you go! Taking baby steps will cut you some slack but still have you feeling powerful as you **all** settle in.