



We are moving

How can I help my children to cope with this?



Moving can be a profound experience for children

The end of the year is fast approaching, and for some people, it may also mean they will have to move to another town.

Father is promoted, or mom and dad have separated, which means that either one or both need to move to another town. This can be a profound experience for children - mainly because they usually have no say in the decision and therefore feel completely powerless and at the mercy of others.

Unfortunately, asking for children's input in such big, responsible decisions is rarely possible because they rarely have all the background knowledge to consider all the aspects involved. The decision is often outside the parents' control, ex., financial survival.

Sometimes parents - as the adults in the family - have to make uncomfortable decisions. Such decisions are hopefully accompanied by thoughtfulness and responsibility. That responsibility must then also be extended to minimise the impact of the move for the children.



Prepare your children for the upcoming move

1. Be sure to tell your children about your plans before the last minute. They must have a chance to get used to the idea and to say goodbye to their friends, home, and surroundings.
2. Children's immediate reaction to change is usually fear. So give them as much information as possible about the move process and the new environment.
3. Help your child to form a clear picture of the new environment. If it is close enough, drive and show the new house, school, church, and shopping center to the whole family. If this is impossible, show as many photos as possible so the child can visualize the new environment.
4. Help your children verbalize their fears. Be honest with them about your fears - this normalizes their emotion. In other words, they will then not feel something is wrong with them by fearing the change.

5. In case of divorce, where the child will no longer live near one parent, a clear parenting plan must be in place. This must also be communicated to the child - at the child's level of understanding. It must also be ensured that the move is not made to alienate the parent who is left behind.

6. Make an effort to help your child say goodbye to friends. Have a party and create memories. Minor children can all make paint prints of their hands in a scrapbook. Photos of the party and the friends can also be pasted in the book. Older children can all write a message as well as their contact numbers.

7. Try to keep as much of your child's familiar environment as possible. Ask her if she wants to keep her old room decor, and don't immediately try to comfort him/her with a new bike/toy. Objects from the old environment make the transition easier.

8. Try to visit the new school beforehand and meet the teachers. It can also help to visit the new congregation you will join.

9. During the preparation phase for the move, ensure that the whole family's well-being is optimally taken care of. Stress is handled much better if your general health is good and you are rested.

10. Be patient. And when your patience runs out, take a deep breath and be even more patient. You cannot expect your child to adapt within a week or two and accept the new idea you have probably been thinking about for months.