

Moving? Handle (Children) With Care!



Sooner or later, many families face the prospect of relocating. Stressful and disruptive as it is for adults, moving — and the anticipation of moving — is even more traumatic for children. Parents and teachers who are able to address children's needs and worries in advance can help the transition become a positive experience.

Renee Raab Whitcombe, author of *Look Who's Moving to a New Home*, offers these tips for preparing children for their upcoming relocation.

- 1. Present the move in a positive light.** Explain to children the circumstances of the move (job transfer, new job, being closer to family), and let them know why relocating is good for their family. Convey your genuine enthusiasm, but don't oversell it with over-the-top cheerleading.
- 2. Listen. And then listen some more.** Communication is critical between parents and children when introducing and preparing for a move to a new home. Encourage questions and candid discussion.
- 3. Explain the timing and process.** No matter what age the child is, the whole idea of moving becomes more clear when everything is explained step-by-step. Be generous with details.
- 4. Involve the child in the moving process.** Let children help pack their own belongings, allow them to decide which things get thrown out or donated to charity and let them mark the boxes from their own bedrooms.
- 5. Avoid moving day meltdown.** Drop off the children with a friend or relative, or hire a babysitter to take them to the park and out for lunch at a kid-friendly restaurant.

6. Visit and research the new neighborhood. Find out as much as possible about the new home and area. Get a local map of the new area and highlight schools, parks, grocery stores, and other places of interest to kids.

7. Stay in touch with friends and neighbors. Help the children understand that moving away doesn't mean losing special friends and family forever. Compile a memory book. Have a good-bye gathering. Send postcards with your new contact information to friends and family, and include requests for visits, phone calls and email.

8. Be prepared for some acting out and moodiness. It's entirely possible to feel excited, sad, and scared at the same time. Going from the familiar to the unfamiliar is difficult, especially for a child who wasn't responsible for the initial decision to move in the first place.

9. Transfer routines. As you get settled in a new home, remember to bring traditions with you. Keep places such as the dinner table the same. Arrange food and drinks in the fridge like always. Resume Friday movie-and-popcorn-night as soon as possible.

10. Plug in to the new neighborhood. Sign up for activities children already enjoy (sports, art class, dance, or martial arts). Get a library card and hit the mall. A proactive approach will go far to generate a sense of familiarity quickly and is sure to help break the ice.

Renee Raab Whitcombe recently relocated from Cleveland, OH to Manhattan Beach, CA with her husband and two young daughters. Visit her website www.buddingfamily.com for information about *LOOK WHO'S MOVING TO A NEW HOME*, an easy-to-personalize transition keepsake journal for children.

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in." — Rachel Carson