

Moving On

You finally got that new job, but (yikes!) it means moving to a different city. On top of everything else the transition will involve, there's your child to consider. Just when he's settled into school and friendships, you have to uproot him—and he's none too pleased about the news. Kids who relocate with their families will have all kinds of feelings about the upheaval. Part of your job is to make it a kinder, gentler experience for yours.

Above all, keep the talk positive, says Sharon Ramey, PhD, a professor of child and family studies at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Explain, for example, that you'll all be living in a neat new house, that you have a great job opportunity, that he'll be closer to his grandparents. "It helps a child understand the move if he knows the concrete reason, and talk of move perks will help him feel more upbeat," says Dr. Ramey.

Depending on your child's temperament and how readily he adapts to change, you should give him at least a month or two's notice about



Homeward Bound

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nging schools schoolers, Dr. oving in the "Classrooms rhythms, and a ear may have in. So it's best when the new ie says. o be distressed —his way of

showing affection for his surroundings and mourning the impending loss. Help him through this by focusing on the things that won't change. "Showing him that his life will have some continuity can really comfort him," says Dr. Ramey. So let him know he'll keep his bedroom furniture, he can still call Grandma every Sunday, and the family dog will of course stay with you. If possible, hold on to soothing, familiar daily routines during and after the move, like eating dinner and going to bed at usual times.

ve CONNECT WITH HIS NEW SCHOOL. New kids are vulner- so take time to meet your child's teacher, his classmates and the ins and outs of the school. **STAY IN TOUCH.** Encourage your old friends. This will help him maintain continuity and closeness ds. **GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY.** Join a local community zation to help your whole family ease into your new home base.

Let your child control some of the action. "Talk about his picking out a new bedspread for his room or a new bike for his new neighborhood," Dr. Ramey suggests. "Verbalizing these things will get him excited and help him adjust."

Anyone's acclimation to a new situation takes time, certainly a child's. So give yours some leeway after the move, when he might regress a bit. "Snuggle up if he seems to need more cuddle time, or give him space if he needs more alone time," advises Dr. Ramey. "Respect your child's right to his feelings and limit demands on his maturity during this transition." In six to nine months he should be used to his new school and neighborhood. And remember that big change can reap big rewards. "When older children look back, they often see these events as positive times of enrichment and growth," she adds. Now go on and get packin'!

—Susan Gerstenganz

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