



# MOVING *with children*

## HOW TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM

### BEFORE: PREPARATION

- Tell your children about the move as soon as you can. The more time they have to think about and prepare for the move, the easier it will be for them.
- Give your children a chance to express their feelings, and try to be honest about your own feelings. Most children will feel some anger, sadness, or worry about the move. These responses are natural, and kids who have a chance to express them will work through their doubts more easily.
- Help older children prepare a list of phone numbers and addresses of close friends, relatives, and other important people in their lives. Knowing they can stay in touch with these people is an important part of a successful move.
- If your kids are old enough, let them participate in decision making. Have the kids keep a notebook of potential new homes with positives and negatives listed.
- If you are able before you move, take your children to your new home and explore the new neighborhood and town or city together. If that isn't possible, take pictures of your new home, the schools your kids will attend, a nearby park, and anything else that would be interesting to them.
- Make a scrapbook containing pictures of your pre-move home, friends, and other mementoes of your life together.
- Call the principal of your children's schools and set up a meeting with their teachers or guidance counselor. The new school may even be able to give you names of students in your child's class who live near your new home.
- If you can, try to meet families in your new neighborhood before you move. Being familiar with people when you move in will help your children feel more at home.
- Try to line up some activities your child can participate in after the move; A sports team, music lessons, art classes, a scouting troop. Not only will activities like these keep your children involved; they'll also help them feel like part of a group - an important aspect of settling in.

### DURING: REMEMBER WHAT'S IMPORTANT

- Throughout the move, stay as upbeat and calm as possible. Your own mood will impact other family members. With older children, it is important to be honest about uncertainties you may have, but also to be generally optimistic about the move and the positive ways it will affect the family. Involve your kids in the packing. Older kids can put their own belongings in boxes, and kids of all ages will enjoy decorating the boxes containing their things. Doing so will also make finding your children's things easier once you are at the new house.
- Try to stick to your routines. Have meals at the same times as always. If your kids nap, encourage them to lie down at the usual time. Keep their normal bedtimes.
- Don't pack the things that your children treasure. Take blankets, beloved stuffed animals, favorite books, and other prized items in a separate box or bag that you can bring with you in the car or on the plane when you go to your new home.
- Help your children say good-bye to the important people in their lives. For

their friends, a pizza or make-your-own sundae party is a fun way to celebrate the friendship. With neighbors or other special adults, you may want to set up a time to stop by and say good-bye as a family.

### AFTER: GETTING SETTLED

- Don't spend too much time unpacking, at least not right away! The essentials are important to unload and you want the house to feel settled, but wait on the less important stuff. In the first few days, take time to enjoy your new home with your family. Take walks. Check out local restaurants and take-out spots. Introduce yourselves to your new neighbors. Spend time at the park.
- Be on the look-out for neighborhood kids, and help introduce your children to them. If it's comfortable for you and your children, invite some of the neighborhood kids over for pizza and a movie.
- Let your children have some input in planning the new house, especially in choosing things to buy for their rooms. Even if you don't follow through on their ideas, it is important to listen to what they think. Be tactful if you choose another option, and let some decisions be entirely up to them - for example, the placement of their bed or the color of the rug or paint in their bedroom.
- Get involved: church groups, synagogues, YMCA and activity clubs, etc. Enable socializing. If a couple of months have gone by and your child seems unusually troubled, ask a doctor or guidance counselor. Signs that your child may need help: unusual academic difficulty; ongoing irritability; trouble with peers; changes in sleep or eating habits; a generally despondent mood. Give them time, this behavior can last 4 - 5 months for teens.
- Above all, listen. Try to be there when your kids get home after the first day in their new schools, even if it means having to leave work early that day. Regularly ask how things are going, and take time to listen. Sometimes kids have a hard time opening up; spending relaxed time together may help them to bring up whatever is on their minds.
- For children and adults, it takes time to feel at home. With your understanding and patience, your children will be reassured that, after awhile, things will get easier; everything won't feel so new; and a home is, after all, wherever the family is.

