

Making the Move Easy on Children

Children, especially the youngest, are often worried and scared of the prospect of moving from the home they've known all their lives. Here are a few tips to help make the move a smooth, even pleasant event for the little ones.

- ✓ Make sure that children hear the news of the move from *you* first, not someone else. For the younger ones, an excessive advance warning is unnecessary and overly stressful; let them know only when you're ready to start getting things organized. For the teenagers, an early warning is best, as many will be offended or downright angry if the news was kept from them for long.
- ✓ Portray the new home in a *positive, truthful* way. Let teenagers know precise details on the home, the neighborhood, the local establishments; let younger children in on the simpler facets, such as the house itself, the yard, and the nearby schools and playgrounds. If possible, take the children to see it and let them get used to the idea that, soon, that'll be "home" to them. If not, take plenty of pictures, or videotape a little tour through the house to show them.
- ✓ Allay worries by involving the children in the moving process. Children will immediately see past most sugar-coating you might want to do and worry about things an adult doesn't even consider, such as whether or not a favorite teddy will be able to come with them. Be attentive to their worries and act swiftly to reassure them.
- ✓ Make leaving as painless as possible. Children will be leaving behind friends, mentors, favorite places, and their bedrooms. Host a going-away party and let them invite who they will. For teenagers, a long-distance calling card or cell phone plan will help them keep in touch with close friends, boyfriends, and/or girlfriends. Do everything possible to help children maintain important relationships, while still being practical about it.
- ✓ Encourage the children to make friends and socialize as quickly as possible. For teenagers, that can be as simple as handing them a street map and the keys for a little while and letting them explore the town. For smaller children, a trip to the local playground can do wonders to make them feel at home. If the move happens during summer, it may be a bit more difficult to get them integrated; once school starts, however, encourage them to get involved in any sports, clubs, or other activities that they might find interesting. New friends become best friends, after all.
- ✓ If, on the off chance, there *are* some more serious problems, don't ignore them or let them slide. If a child is consistently, constantly, extremely upset about the move, a teacher, school counselor, or even a family therapist should be contacted.

All in all, moving is one of the most stressful events in any person's life – adults and children alike. However, with some attentiveness and care, you can make your child's memory of the move to the new house a pleasant one. Listen to their concerns and address them quickly, and you'll find them quite happy in their new home!