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How to Create a Smooth Move for Your Family

Moving to a new community may be one of the most stress-producing experiences a family faces.

Frequent moves or even a single move can be especially hard on children and adolescents. Studies show children who move frequently are more likely to have problems at school. Moves are even more difficult if accompanied by other significant changes in the child's life, such as a death, divorce, loss of family income or a need to change schools.

Moves interrupt friendships. To a new child at school, it may at first seem that everyone else has a best friend or is securely involved with a group of peers. The child must get used to a different schedule and curriculum, and may



be ahead in certain subjects and behind in others. This situation may make the child stressed, anxious or bored.

Children in kindergarten or first grade may be particularly vulnerable to a family move because developmentally they are just in the process of separating from their parents and adjusting to new authority figures and social relationships. The relocation can

interfere with that normal process of separation by causing them to return to a more dependent relationship with their parents.

In general, the older the child, the more difficulty he or she will have with the move because of the increasing importance of the peer group. Pre-teens and teenagers may repeatedly protest the move, or ask to stay in their hometown with a friend's family. Some youngsters may not talk

about their distress, so parents should be aware of the warning signs of depression, including changes in appetite, social withdrawal, a drop in grades, irritability, sleep disturbances or other dramatic changes in behavior or mood. Children who seem depressed by a move may be reacting more to the stress they are experiencing than to the relocation.

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Making the Move Easier:

- Explain clearly to the children why the move is necessary.
- Familiarize the children with the new area with maps, photographs or the daily newspaper.
- Describe advantages of the new location that the child might appreciate such as having their own room, a new playground, a nearby beach or an amusement park.
- After the move, get involved with the children in activities at your church or synagogue, school, scouts, YMCA, etc.
- If a son or daughter is a senior in high school, consider the possibility of letting him or her stay with a trusted family until the school year is over.
- Let children participate in designing or furnishing their room.
- Help children keep in touch with friends from the previous neighborhood through telephone, letters, e-mail and personal visits.

Information for this article was provided by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

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If the child shows persistent signs of depression or distress, parents can ask their family doctor to refer them to a child and adolescent psychiatrist or therapist. The psychiatrist or therapist can evaluate and treat the child's emotional problems which may be associated with stress and also help parents make the transition easier for the whole family.



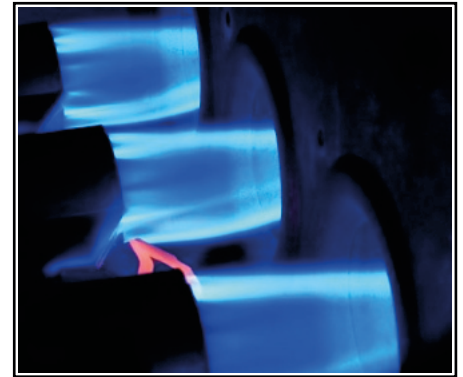
While preparing for possible difficulties, remember that many good things can come from a move. The family may grow closer; parents may learn more about their

children from going through the experience with them; and children may enjoy a new sense of independence and accomplishment. With the proper attention from parents, and professional help if necessary, moving can be a positive growth experience for children, leading to increased self-confidence and interpersonal skills.

Reduce Your Gas Bill

The simplest way to lower your natural gas bill is to use less gas. Here are some tips on how to reduce your heating costs:

- Turn down your thermostat 5 to 10 degrees while you are away or asleep. (Every degree above 68° adds about 3% to your heating bill.)
- Turn down your water heater temperature to 120° or 125°.
- Place window film on the interior of leaky or drafty windows.
- Have your furnace and water heater professionally cleaned and inspected.
- Change furnace filters monthly.
- Replace your old furnace with a new, efficient model.
- Caulk and weather-strip around doors and windows.
- Vacuum heat registers and return air vents regularly.
- Make sure furniture and draperies do not block heat flow.
- Keep curtains open when the sun is shining.
- Add more attic insulation.
- Call your utility about having a home energy audit.



THE Trivia Block

What is one of the most common reasons for selling a home?

Job promotion and transfer are the top reasons for selling a home.

On average, four million families sell a home each year!

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