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How to Handle a Mid-School Year Move

By Susan Dunn

How to Handle a Mid-School Year Move by Susan Dunn, The EQ Coach

Q: What's worse than moving?

A: Moving in the middle of the school year.

My family did it more than once when I was growing up. I still remember some of the incidents—being introduced in the front of the class, having to share a locker until they could find one for me, breaking into the already-formed social groups, having the wrong "accent".

Whatever the reason for the move, moving is stressful.

Your kids are going through the same stress you are only with less understanding and absolutely no control. If they don't already know what it's like to "be the new kid on the block," they're about to find out.

The NCC says it takes as long as 16 months for both adults and children to adjust to a move.

Here are some tips for helping make the move easier for your family.

1. Keep structure amidst the confusion and disorder.

Tighten up on meal times, bedtime routines, and other traditions that give structure and stability to your family life. Stay home and skip the babysitters for a while. Let some important things remain stable while the earth moves beneath their feet.

2. Expect regression.

When we're stressed, we retreat to former times to regain stability. And our kids do too! You can expect a newly potty-trained child to relapse, little ones creeping into your bed at night, more tears, picky eating, nervous tics. Loosen up on these things. They'll go away once things settle down.

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3. Acknowledge both negative and positive feelings.

You, too, will be having them. There's this you'll miss, and this to look forward to. The old town had an amusement park, but this one has a great children's museum. You'll miss the snow, but now the beach is an hour away. Ambivalent feelings are typical of any transition. Help your child look forward to good, new things while they say good-bye, sadly, to things and people they'll miss. Share your joy in your beautiful new home, and your frustration in not knowing where the light switches are, or the ice cream store.

4. Orient to the way your child thinks.

When we moved when my older son was 6, we left him with my aunt and uncle while we went to look for the new house. A naturally outgoing child, he was upset until he learned we'd be leaving the family dog there too. Children look at things differently.

In his mind, he knew we'd come back for the dog. He was calmed.

5. Be concrete and talk about details.

Help the child see what it will mean to them, depending upon developmental age and temperament. With a preschooler, let him help you pack up a treasured item in a box, seal it up, move it around in a wagon, then return it, open it up and take the treasured thing out and put it back where it came from. This is an experiential lesson that what we pack up doesn't disappear forever. Children are concerned about their possessions, just like we are. Also they displace their general anxiety onto something concrete like that because they have no other way to express it.

With a toddler, use the doll house and dolls and toy cars to show what will happen. Read books about moving. "Mallory's Moving and her Monkey is Missing" (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0964546302/susandunnmome-20>) is a good one.

6. Instead of focusing on logistics, focus on people and feelings.

The move will get accomplished. Take time to deal with the emotional aspects and it will pay off in the long run. It's a lot more important. This is just one of many transitions your family will go through, and how you handle it will have repercussions in the future. All transitions bring ambivalent emotions and fears and fantasies about the future, which is unknown. You'll grow through this as a family.

7. Make a trial run if you possibly can.

Go visit the new place with your children. Show them where their new room will be (let them decorate it if possible). Visit their school. Meet the neighbors. Point out the "same things" like the DQ and McDonalds. Look up sports and scouts programs. Show them where the new movie theater is.

8. Expect an adjustment period at school.

Children learn best in a comfortable emotional environment, and a move is stressful. It will take them a while to get acclimated. Observe when you pick them up, or talk with them to find out if they're making a satisfactory social adjustment. According to research one of the highest emotional intelligence competencies is being able to break into an already formed group. Be compassionate. Help them learn the skills. You may be going through the same thing yourself! The EQ Foundation Course (<http://www.susandunn.cc/courses.htm>) can help.

9. If not you, then who?

We've lost track of who brings the homemade cake over – the old neighbor, or the new one. Don't ask for whom the bell tolls — let your children choose a cake, bake it together, and carry it over to meet the new folks. Or have an open house and

invite the other families over.

10. Saying good-bye precedes saying hello.

Let your child have a going away party with their friends, and then a new party in the new place. Take an occasion (Easter, birthday) or none at all — a skating or bowling party, or sleepover.

Susan Dunn, The EQ Coach, offers coaching and Internet courses on emotional intelligence. Visit her on the web at www.susandunn.cc and <mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc> for FREE ezine, FREE Strengths course, FREE sample coaching session

A New School Year

By Kimberly Chastain

Depending on where you live school will be starting this month or next month. A new school year is usually exciting and scary at the same time. Most children won't admit it, but they are ready to get back to school and see their friends. As much as I love not having a rigid schedule in the summer, I do miss the structure of the school year. We get up later in the summer and go to bed later as well.

When you think of a new School Year what are your first thoughts? Back to school shopping for clothes and school supplies. A big transition from elementary to middle school, or to high school, even college. A new teacher who you heard is strict or not strict enough? There can often be lots of anxiety with a new school year for parents as well as children.

Can I offer a few suggestions for your back to school list? Remember whose children they are. Yes they are our children, but they are God's children. He cares about them and loves them more than we ever could. Pray for your children. Pray for their academics, choice of friends, study habits, and wisdom to make Godly choices. Pray for their teachers. If their teachers are not Christians, pray that

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God can use you to be an example to their teachers. Pray for the administrators in your child's school. Pray for the safety of your child and all the children at their school. Pray that your children will see a Godly example in you, with how you handle school difficulties or problems with your children. Begin praying with other mothers for their children as well. We don't have to carry the burden alone. Above all remember God is in control. I often have a difficult time remembering that principle.

In closing, God is a mighty God and he cares about our concerns. I often pray on the way to taking my children to school. I pray when my children are having difficulties with friends. God cares about everything in our lives and He truly cares about our children. My mother is a prayer warrior for my children and myself. May we all become prayer warriors for our children. Take your problems to Him and leave them there.

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Kimberly M. Chastain, MS, LMFT is the Christian Working Mom Coach and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in helping Christian women make the most of their lives. She is the author of the on-line course, "I Can't Say No" and Pearls of Encouragement for Christian Working Moms, a free e-book. If you suffer from "I Can't Say `No" Syndrome, visit Kimberly's site today for the details on an exciting email course that's sure to set you free!

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