



## Ease Your Children's Stress About Moving

Yes, the new house is bigger, but relocating can trigger anger, anxiety or sadness in kids. Being prepared can help smooth the transition.

BY CHERYL LOCK

**DESPITE THE CURRENT** pandemic, millions of people are still moving. In fact, approximately one in five U.S. adults moved because of the pandemic, or know someone who did, according to the Pew Research Center. And whether you're relocating just a few miles, or a few states, it's not unusual for a child to act out after a move, perhaps misbehaving more than usual or crying at odd times.

"Children are young and new to the world, and changing a child's 'safe space' is a big deal," said Maureen Healy, author of "The Emotionally Healthy Child." "They may feel a number of challenging emotions during a move, from anger and anxiety to fear and sadness. Most boys and girls rely on structure, routine and their regular environment to feel safe in what is often a very uncertain world."

Understanding how children often act out, so that you can respond appropriately, is a start. For example, children might show stress by saying their bodies hurt, that they have headaches or their tummies are sore, or by reverting to baby talk, said Beth Peters, a licensed psychologist and founder of Dandelion Psychology, in Arvada, Colo., which provides therapy services for children, adults and families. But the more likely way a young child will react to stress is through nonverbal signs, like thumb sucking, bed wetting or becoming extra clingy.

Establishing some systems and routines before, during and after a move can help kids — and parents — better handle the situation.

### PREPARATION

To the extent that it's possible, involve your child as much as you can in the family discussions leading up to a move, said David Black, pediatric neuropsychologist and director of the Center for Assessment and Treatment in Chevy Chase, Md. Let them know

why you're moving — because Mommy got a new job, or because we needed more space — and validate any feelings they have. Dr. Black suggests saying something like, "I know this is hard, I can see you're really sad to miss your house, and I'll miss it, too."

After that, try "pre-paving" the path for your child's moving experience. Bring your child with you on walk-throughs — or at least show them photos on Google Earth — and explain what's going to be different in the new home ("You'll have a bigger room!"), and what will be the same ("But you'll still have the same bed!").

Dr. Peters also suggests asking your child what they need to feel safe or comfortable in a new space, or what makes their current house or room feel like home for them. Use their responses to create a comfort bag that the child can carry with them on the day of the move, so you don't have to dig around for their attachment animal or to find the glow-in-the-dark stickers they can sleep without.

For school-age children, doing a video or picture tour of a new environment — like a new school — can help. "In the developmental psychology world, we call these social stories," said Dr. Black. "I think a brief Zoom call with a new teacher can also help, especially if the teacher is skilled at providing a developmentally appropriate connection for the child."

Healy also recommends having your child keep something special — like their bedroom doorknob — to remember their old home. Or use children's picture books like "The Berenstain Bears' Moving Day" with a moral about changing houses, to help your child preview the actual experience.

### THE BIG DAY

The day of a move is often stressful for parents and young kids alike. Dr. Black said to remember to give yourself a little extra time and space. He suggests building time for your child to have a melt-down into the schedule, "so you have room for your child to be upset, and when that happens,

you'll have allowed yourself the time to be there for them, instead of having to move things quickly along."

For families in a two-parent household, Dr. Peters suggests switching off, having one parent in charge of the children during the move. For single parents, calling in backup can be a lifeline.

In the wake of Covid-19, how this person watches your child might look a little different from before. If your move is two or more weeks out, and you'd like to have someone else there in person to help watch your children, consider asking a close friend or relative to quarantine themselves in order to help out for that particular day.

If your child is fairly independent — 3½ or above — and is able to communicate their needs verbally, go to the bathroom and isn't high risk for dangerous behaviors, having a neighbor watch them in the backyard over the fence or on FaceTime — with the ability to call you back if anything important — is one option. Otherwise, a lot of families right now are pairing up with other families and quarantining together," said Dr. Peters, so you could call on your quarantine pod, if you have one.

It also helps to create a proper, ritualized farewell for the day, including which neighbors you'll say goodbye to, and what photos or other objects you can take for memories. "The shortest route to the brain is the nose, so olfactory responses can be really intense for children," said Dr. Peters. To create strong sensory input and positive effect, create a memory box with things like dirt and leaves from your old house that your child can revisit later.

Once you arrive at your new house, "the more control you can give your kid the better," said Dr. Peters. Allow them to pick the first meal you have, and have them

help you unpack a special box you set aside for their room. "This way they feel like it's not an unpredictable world and they're just a leaf on the wind," she added.

### SETTLING IN

If your child is clearly missing their old home — requesting to go back and asking how long you will be staying at the new place — try getting her something new to the home, like a pet, just as she is new to the home. You can make a big deal of heading to the pet store to pick out a fish, for example, then let it live in your child's room.

Healy also recommends clear and consistent messaging. Help kids focus on the positives of the move ("It's so fun to have a playroom full of your most favorite things!"), while letting them know it's OK to feel sad and confused.

Connect with the people they love — old neighbors, friends and family — as soon as possible when you're in the new house, said Dr. Peters. Dr. Black suggests also planning to connect to the new community quickly, even if social distancing means those connections look a little different these days. For example, "the most successful play dates, we have found, include bike riding," with its combination of being outdoors and on the move mitigating the risk, he said.

Perhaps the biggest thing you can do to help your child cope with a move is to spend more time with them. "Extra time with parents can really help," said Dr. Black. "More bedtime stories, more family dinners, more time together on weekends, more snuggling in bed in the morning — whatever it is, more face time."

Like most things regarding parenting, individual support should be tailored to your particular kid, especially if your child has special needs. Seek out an if your child is seriously acting out or showing signs of significant difficulty — like trouble sleeping, refusal to eat or bed wetting — a month or so after the move.

## Use All That Corn

Cook up kernels and cobs in creative ways.

BY FLORENCE FABRICANT



**WHEN BUYING FRESH** corn, the old rule of thumb is to get one for each person and "one for the pot," or maybe two, and it still applies, now that farm stands and markets are piled high with moist, green, just-picked ears. And it's worth the added pocket change even though some farms are selling corn for as much as \$12 an ear: There is so much you can do with extra cooked corn-on-the-cob you might as well plan to have some on hand. A single ear will yield from three-fourths to a cup of kernels. And don't forget to keep the cobs. Collect them in a plastic bag in the freezer and you have the goods to enhance a quick vegetable stock.

You can add corn to almost anything — grain salads, muffins, quesadillas or mac and cheese — and dress them up. Here are some possibilities you might not have thought of.

### CEVICHE

Corn kernels are a welcome addition to this raw seafood dish.

### LOBSTER ROLLS

Add corn to the filling and tamp down the expense — you'll need a little less lobster meat.

### MUSHROOM SALAD

Sauté mushrooms — sliced shiitake caps or, if you can get them, orange chanterelles — with a shallot or two, add corn kernels, pile the mixture over arugula and dress the salad with a warm white wine vinaigrette. Corn and chanterelles is one of those dream matchups.

### PASTA

Go ahead, shock the purists and mess up their Alfredo, carbonara or trofie al pesto by adding corn. On the other hand, corn is not particularly appealing on pizza.

### POTATO SALAD, EGG SALAD

Fold some corn kernels into mayonnaise salads like those. Corn has an affinity for mayonnaise; in Mexico it's slathered on whole ears the way people in the United States use butter.

### RELISH

Mix corn kernels with the pickle relish for hot dogs. And if you have finished the pickles in a jar but still have the juice, fill the jar with corn and some minced red bell pepper and expect your own corn relish in about a week.

### STUFFED VEGETABLES

Scoop out the insides of small to medium-size tomatoes, sweet peppers or zucchini and stuff them with a mixture of corn, onion, cooked quinoa, herbs and maybe even grated cheese for baking.

### SUCOTASH

Classically the dish combines fresh corn and lima beans, but diced sautéed zucchini is a quicker seasonal partner for the corn.

### Soup

Hot soups — including clam chowder, tomato soup, chicken soup and minestrone — can be bolstered with corn kernels. With enough kernels, you can make a cream of corn soup to serve hot or cold. Corn and crab meat soup is another option (don't forget the hot sauce). As for cold soups like gazpacho or cucumber, corn is better as a garnish instead of being mixed into the soup itself.

### SEAFOOD STUFFING

Toss corn kernels with garlic, herbs and bread crumbs moistened with butter or olive oil, add chopped clams and pack it all into the clam shells for baking or broiling. Or use the mixture without the clams to stuff a boned fish for baking.