

R. A. F. T.

The easiest way to remember what's needed for healthy closure is to imagine building a raft. By lashing four basic "logs" together, we will be able to keep the raft afloat and get safely to the other side.

Reconciliation: Any time we face a move from one place to another, it's easy to deal with tensions in relationships by ignoring them. We think "In 2 weeks, I'll be gone and never see that friend again anyway. Why bother to work out this misunderstanding"?

Unfortunately, when we refuse to resolve interpersonal conflicts, two things can happen. First, we are so focused on how good it will be to get away from this problem that we not only skip over the reconciliation needed for good closure, but also ignore the total process of closure and don't move on to building the rest of the RAFT. Second, the difficulties don't go away when we move. Instead, as we leave, we carry with us our mental baggage of unresolved problems. This is a poor choice for 3 reasons: bitterness is never healthy for anyone; the old discontentment can interfere with starting new relationships and if we ever move back to this same place and have to face these people again, it will be much harder to resolve the issues then.

Obviously, true reconciliation depends on the cooperation and response of the other party, but we need to try to do what we can to achieve this resolution.

Affirmation: Expressions of appreciation, commendation and encouragement for friendship, contributions and expectations provide the base that enables individuals to recognize the value of the past and embrace the legitimate hope that the enjoyed relationships have a future. It communicates the message that... "When we meet again, even years later, we shall still be friends bound by common memories and experiences".

Farewell: Making a list of significant people, places, pets, and possessions and the appropriate ways to say goodbye to each is important. Help your kids say goodbye to people by writing notes, baking cookies, having a last sleepover,...anything that acknowledges the importance of that relationship and says Thank you for being a special person in my life...I'll miss you. Of course, people are the most important, but taking photos to help you remember places, making satisfactory arrangements for the pets and disposing of your possessions are all important markers for the leaving portion of transition.

Think Destination: Make an effort as you are saying goodbyes to also think realistically about the new destination...what are some of the things to look forward to? Try to develop realistic but positive expectations for one's new life and location because it helps to minimize anxiety and disappointment. Make an effort to find as much information and share it with your children, so that the excitement of going to a new place can provide some balance to the heaviness of leaving.