



The Strategy Well

These are strategies collected over the years...

Strategies Worth Repeating

- Parents must take care of themselves; if parents are not ok, the kids are not ok
- Provide opportunity for closure with maids
- Get in touch - by communication and visually - with new location; check school websites for photos, get e-mail accounts set up; communicate with someone in new location
- Minimize time with paperwork; push it through so it is not a long, agonizing process
- When packing, label each box WELL with specific contents so that you can immediately find what you need on that first or second day/night
- Bring with you a "welcome gift" for your children for the first night in the new place
- Take photos of goodbye parties and carry those with you to the new location in an album
- At goodbye parties, have a book for people to sign or write comments in
- Start goodbyes (parties, special times with friends) early so you have plenty of time to say goodbye to everyone
- Try to connect you child with a local "sponsor" well in advance of your arrival in order to make early connections.
- Take inexpensive "thank you" gifts with you for those who assist in your move.
- Organize goodbye "events" for your kids (party, dance night, bike ride).
- Create an ongoing "Book of Life" where each chapter represents a location where you have lived. Include photos, mementos, writings, etc.
- Create ways to stay connected to your "home" culture regardless of where you are living. These might include language, food, and/or holidays. These traditions can move with you providing consistency and connectedness no matter where you are.
- Bring your family traditions with you and start those immediately. These might include Friday night game night, eating at McDonald's the night before the first day of school, or Sunday brunch.
- Make a check/to do list
- Plan an exciting trip in the new destination, or in between leaving one place and arriving at the next.
- Make a DVD of friends, school, etc.
- Communicate with the company about specific arrival needs; don't be afraid to be vocal
- Involve kids in the decision-making process (bedroom decorations, car purchasing, etc.)
- Try to learn some of the language before arrival, even if it is only numbers and directions
- Print "business cards" for children with all of their contact information to give to their friends and classmates
- Bring comfort foods (peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, goldfish crackers, cereal, etc.) with you in your luggage so that you have them immediately upon arrival
- Take photos during final visits to locations, and then as soon as you arrive, tape those pictures to the walls in your new home
- Make a special memory item to take with you, for example a pillowcase embroidered with all of the classmate names
- Take favorite clothes with you in your suitcase
- Take farewell letters and notes with you to reread during your initial days in the new location
- Take a favorite soap or fabric softener for the comforting scene

Strategies Worth Reconsidering

- Reduce time, as much as possible, in temporary accommodations (hotels)
 - Don't throw away things (like old toys or treasured possessions) too soon or too near the move.
- Another strategy is to throw toys away WELL (months) in advance of the move in order that the disappearance of the toy and the move are not connected. A "trial period" where the toy is gone (but not yet really thrown out yet) is often useful to gauge a child's reaction to the loss of the toy.
- In addition to the inevitable (new school, living accommodation, friends, job), avoid or at the least be aware of multiple, simultaneous changes (e.g. house to apartment living, private to public school, resumption of or new career for accompanying spouse, departure of sibling to college/boarding school, driving to school changes to school bus transportation, new pet). If possible, wait to make some of the changes.
 - Avoid mid-year moves. Understandably, this is often unavoidable.
 - Be keenly aware of the extra stress if deciding to completely immerse yourself into the new language, culture, lifestyle (e.g. moving into a completely "local" neighborhood devoid of expatriate support and diversion). What may seem appealing may become overwhelming and too stressful.
 - Don't misjudge small children in the moving process; they are sensitive to changes too.
 - Don't wait too long to tell children about the move. It can increase the chances that the child hears about the move indirectly rather than from the parents.
 - Don't ignore behavior changes in a child before the move. Be aware of changes early so that they can be addressed.
 - Don't challenge yourself with personal expectations (intensive language courses, online coursework, etc.) which are too high. They might interfere with the time and energy necessary to be yourself and to enjoy your new location and friends.
 - Don't draw out the leaving process too long.