



## Helping your child manage change – some tips

### Dealing with change



Change can be difficult for any of us to deal with. It can make us distressed and anxious. Most children have less experience of change than adults and they may need extra support to manage it. Changing schools or moving to a new house are common examples. Fortunately, there are some useful things you can do to support your child through change.

### Help your child get to know where and what they are going into



Change often means moving from something comfortable and familiar to something unknown, but you can make this easier by finding ways for your child to practise thinking about what the change will involve and becoming more comfortable with it. If the change is going to a new school for example, you can look at photos of the school, talk about what might be different and what might be the same as the school before. If the school offers the chance to visit before the new start date then that's a great thing to do. If not, you can practise taking the journey from your home to the school together. If you can find a way to end that trip with a treat then this can help your child develop positive associations with that journey, which can help to reduce any anxious feelings. You can do the same things when moving to a new house. Use your imagination to think of fun ways to do this.

### Help your child connect with others



These days there are often local social media groups of parents. If you are moving to a new house there may be a group that covers the area you are moving to. Similarly, with a change to a new school, you can try to find social media groups of school parents. Ask the new school about this. Here you may find out about get togethers where your child and yourself can meet other children and their parents in the same situation and make new friends.

### Look out for the positives in the change and seek out the fun!



Think for yourself about any ways you can highlight the fun aspects of the change. Perhaps there is a playground nearby to the new school or home that you can visit. You can talk about how much fun you can have visiting it regularly once the change has happened.

## Keep listening



Listening carefully to your child is important at any time and especially when you are helping them to manage a big change. It's important because it will help you to know if your child is anxious about it and, if they are, what it is they are anxious about. You can encourage them to talk about how they feel about the change if they want to. This will allow them to express their own fears and gives you an opportunity to show them that those feelings are a natural part of going through change and that you understand them.

## Don't create unnecessary fear or drama



On the other hand, it's also important to avoid making things seem more dramatic than they are because this can make your child's anxiety worse. Children often take the lead from their parents in terms of how they react to a situation, so showing your child that you feel confident that everything will work out fine is just as important as allowing them to talk about their concerns. It is a tricky balance, but it is possible to show you understand their concerns but also that you believe that the change is exciting and will bring about good things. Doing some of the practical things talked about above (making new friends and helping your child become familiar with what they are moving onto) will reinforce this.

## Remember the basics



You can also help by remembering to keep basic routines and healthy habits going in your family. Getting enough sleep and eating healthily have been shown in research to help to reduce anxiety. Try to keep to a consistent bedtime routine for your child. Avoid conflict situations as much as possible before bedtime. You could find some story books about children going through change where everything works out well and read these at bedtime. Try to keep mealtimes consistent and with good healthy food as much as possible. If it is the summer holidays before your child moves to a new school, it is easy to become very relaxed but remember that some routine is good for all of us. Knowing what to expect and when can help us to feel more in control, especially at times that are confusing and uncertain. Staying patient and calm with your child if they struggle with this at first is important. They need to feel that you are on their side.

