

FRAGILE: MOVE WITH CARE



12 TIPS FOR TAKING YOUR SANITY WITH YOU WHEN YOU MOVE

BY KATHRYN HAUEISEN

Fragile: Move with Care

Twelve Tips for Taking Your Sanity with You When You Move

By Kathryn Haueisen

Some people count sheep when they can't sleep. I count places I've lived. The list is now over thirty places long. I know. It is ridiculous how many times I've changed my address. You don't have to move thirty times to learn these tips. I've summarized them for you here.

People move for many compelling reasons. Some move for a new opportunity. Others move to escape a horrible situation. Whatever the reason, moving is a lot like hard work. There's just no way around it. Even with over thirty moves worth of experience, I still find the task of packing, relocating, unpacking, and starting over again a combination of exciting and exhausting.

The book *Fragile: Move with Care - How to Move Your Sanity Along with Your Stuff* will be available this summer (2018). I will let you know when the complete book is available.

In this booklet you'll find excerpts from the book. "*Twelve Tips*" is my gift to you in the hope you can benefit from what I've learned the hard way.

On the Road Again?

Before you round up piles of brown boxes and roles of packing tape, think about what is prompting this move. Is this move really necessary? Some moves are. Some moves really aren't. You can save yourself a whole lot of pain and expense if you don't move when you really don't need to move. How can you know if this move is necessary?

Transition Tip Number 1

Move on paper before you move with boxes. Write yourself two letters from the future you five years from now.

Letter One: I/We decided to move because: [write down every reason you can conjure up to justify this move.] It was hard because: [write down every detail you can imagine will be necessary to make the move.] But I'm glad I/we did move because: [write down what you imagine life in the new place will be like.]

Letter Two: I/We thought about moving, but then decided to stay here because: [insert all the disadvantages of moving]. I'm glad I/we didn't move because: [insert all the advantages you can list for not moving]. As it turned out [insert what you think life where you already are might be like in five years].

As you do this exercise it will become clearer why you are considering this move and whether it really is in your best interest. If it is, move on to the next section.

We've Gotta Get Outta This Place

The moving chaos begins the moment you start packing the first brown box. So, before you do that, start a moving notebook. Get a three-ring binder with pockets and plastic three-hole sleeves. You'll need sections in your moving notebook such as:

- People to notify
- Places to notify about a change of address.
- Paper work to keep handy.

Transition Tip Number 2

Moving is a major life transition. Pace yourself. Set aside a few minutes a day to plan and organize, then take a break from it. Reward yourself with a favorite snack and/or beverage as you complete each necessary moving-related task.

No! I Don't Want To Move!!!

It's one thing to grab your new college diploma, pack up a dorm room full of worldly possessions and move to your first post-school-not-your-parents'-home place of your own. It's quite another matter to relocate a spouse, children, pets, and plants. People, pets, and plants get quite attached to a place.

Transition Tip Number 3

Make a date with the family to announce the decision to move. Go out to dinner. Personally, I recommend bribery to solicit the cooperation of children. Encourage them to think of some special perk they might enjoy in the new place that you can realistically provide. Then do what you can to deliver that perk once you are settled in your new place.

But You Can't Leave Us!

Some moves take people closer to extended family. Other moves take people further away, mistakenly thinking distance and silence are equal to peace and quiet. How will this move affect your relationship with your relatives? How will that affect your immediate family?

Many misunderstandings and hurt feelings erupt when unspoken expectations go unmet. For example retired parents move to be nearer adult children only to be disappointed when their children's schedules don't include much time for them. Or adult children move so their children are nearer grandparents but the grandparents are gone much of the time enjoying the freedom of retirement to travel.

Transition Tip Number 4:

Give extended family plenty of advance notice that a move might be pending. Make time to talk to each other about expectations around how this move will impact relationships.

What About Me?

Often a move is instigated because someone in the family has been offered a new job or expects to find more lucrative work in the new location. What about the rest of the family? If it is not in the best interest of an older teen or young adult to move with the rest of the family, explore what other options are available. Might that young person stay behind with extended family or close friends? Can a commuter college student find housing on or near campus? Does one spouse need to stay behind for a while to wrap things up or until a new opportunity opens up for him or her in the new location?

Transition Tip Number 5:

Build money into the budget and time into the schedule to let those who want to do so, go back after a few months to visit. Often that helps the “trailing family members” realize that their new home really is now their home. Also encourage contact via social media, face-to-face conversations and texts. However, don’t allow those to take the place of getting out and meeting new people in the new community.

Count the Cost

When a family is offered a promotion and transfer, the deal always sounds terrific. In reality it can take a full year to catch up financially after a move. This is true even when the company is picking up the tab for moving expenses. Before you start shopping for the yacht you intend to buy with all that extra money, consider some of the hidden costs of a move:

Transition Tip Number 6

Set aside funds in a “We Moved” section of the household budget. Most just-moved families make dozens of trips to stores for months to replace items left behind or to accommodate their own particular needs and interests. Such trips chew up \$20 bills and credit card charges in a hurry.

Just-moved families also tend to dine out or carry in more than usual. This is partly an attempt to cope with all the extra work and partly an attempt to fill the void once filled by friends and family back there.

I've Got The Moving Day Blues

Moving puts tremendous pressures on our emotions before, during and after a move. Inventories that rank levels of stress based on life transitions list moving as a major contributor to stress. How will members of your family do in a move?

Transition Tip Number 7

Needing help to adjust to such a major transition is NOT a sign of weakness. Rather, it is a sign of self-respect. It means you care enough about your own well-being and those around you to get the help you need to adjust. Find a spiritual director, mental health professional, pastor, or compassionate friend to accompany you through the transition time. Thanks to the modern miracle of tele-conferencing, you can have face-to-face conversations with trusted people hundreds of miles away until you meet new people in your new home. Take care of yourself. Moving is stressful.

Are We There Yet?

The transition from former home to current home unfolds in four stages:

- Deciding to move
- Preparing to leave the old and enter the new (which often means selling and buying real estate)
- Physically moving people and possessions
- Settling into the new place

Transition Tip Number 8

The longest move starts with a single box. Dealing with all the details involved in a move can be truly overwhelming. Break it down into small pieces. Focus on one, and only one aspect of it at a time. Keep a "to do" list handy in your moving notebook or on a bulletin board. Check off your progress as you work your way through all the steps of the transition.

Who's On First?

You can't possibly notify everyone who needs to know that you are moving first. Determine who does need to know first. Please, refrain from posting the news on social media until you've spoken with the ones who need to know the most. Obviously, those who are going to move with you need to hear the news from you before anyone else tells them. Then think about others you want to hear it straight from you.

Transition Tip Number 9

Make a list of all the people who will need to know about your move. Put a code by each name to indicate how you want them to hear it the news. For example, IP could mean in person. BP could mean before the news is public. PC might mean by phone call. EM might mean by e-mail. SM might mean social media.

Where to Start?

Even if you are fortunate enough to make the kind of move where professionals come in to box everything up one day, load it the next, unload it in the new place, and stick around to unpack, you still need to organize the migration process now or deal with a lot of chaos later. Go through your current place by room to determine what moves, what stays behind, what gets given away or sold if you have the luxury of time to sell things.

Transition Tip Number 10

Ban the word “miscellaneous” from your vocabulary when it comes to labeling boxes. Either label the contents of each box in detail or note the location it was in before you packed it. Consider color-coding boxes according to what room of the house the contents came from and go into. For example, blue means boys’ room; purple means guest bathroom.

So Long, Fare Well

Plenty of people struggle with “good-byes.” Some of the awkwardness and reluctance to ritualize leaving comes from our fear we don’t know what to say or that we’ll start crying. The words aren’t as important as an official send-off and an intentional “Good-Bye.”

Transition Tip Number 11

No matter how tempting it is, don’t sneak out of town in the dark of the night unless you’re running away from a dangerous situation. Good-Bye events are an important part of the transition. It is a way to gently close the door on one chapter and prepare to open the door on another. Good-bye parties and rituals help. Participate in them fully when the opportunity presents itself. They are good for both the ones leaving and the ones staying behind.

Where’s the Welcome Mat?

In all my thirty some moves I can count on half of one hand how many times the neighbors came to me bearing “welcome to the neighborhood” gifts. If you want to know who’s living around you, you may have to go knock on their doors and introduce yourself. If you do, I

suggest you take something with you, perhaps a card with the names of everyone in your household and a way they could reach you if they needed to do so. If you really want to put your best foot forward, take a small gift of some kind, maybe something from the community you just left.

Transition Tip Number 12

You are the newcomer. It is up to you to learn about your new community. Most people love telling people about their hometown. Go out and explore. Talk with clerks and people who look friendly in restaurants. Find a faith community and stick around for the fellowship time after worship. Visit the Chamber of Commerce and pick up literature about the area. You will literally have to make yourself at home.

I hope you've found these dozen Transition Tips helpful. More suggestions about each of these tips plus many other ideas about how to make as smooth a move as possible are found in *Fragile: Move With Care - How to Move Your Sanity Along With Your Stuff*.