MOVING TO A NEW HOME

Moving can be difficult for any family. There is much to be done, including making sure bank accounts are transferred, children are registered in their new school, the cable box and internet lines are connected, and that all that is important is well in your family’s world.

In addition to all the planning and all the packing and all the millions of details that need to be attended to, the developmental needs of your child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) also need to be addressed. Whether the move is around the corner or to another state, you should anticipate that it may be difficult for your child with ASD.

Similar to a very young child, a child with ASD may need to be told about what is actually moving with the family to the new house and what is staying behind. For example, the child’s bed and toys are going to be in the new house, but the bath tub is staying. Consider giving your children stickers to put on the items that they want to be sure are moving with them. These serve as tangible reminders to all during the tumultuous packing period. If your child tags an item that cannot be moved (for example, a wall mural or built-in window seat), make sure you talk about the item with your child and try to find ways to replace or accommodate the need the item fills for your child.

It is usually a good idea to pack the room of your child with ASD last and to unpack and put it in order first. Organization and structure will help your child to feel safer and settled and perhaps result in fewer melt downs. In fact, moving day may be just the right day to ask a close friend or family member to have your kids come over after school in an effort to keep them away from the chaos as much as possible.

Other suggested aids:
A calendar to “count-down” the days until moving day;
A visual timeline noting all the things that happen before moving day and after; this may help the children anticipate the disruption once the movers deliver everything to the new home;
Read books at the child’s reading level about moving, and use these scenarios for discussion about your own move;
Build your own Social Stories™ to personalize your move; place family members in the photos, and talk about their contributions to the move. Social Story™ suggestions:
  - Pictures of the “old” house – the house alone and the house with family members in the photos;
  - Pictures of looking for a new house;
  - Pictures of the new house;
  - Pictures of packing up the old house and getting your family’s things ready for the new house; make sure to photograph those things most important to your child to reassure him or her that these special things are coming with you to the new house;
  - Pictures of a moving truck – great if you can go to the company and photograph one from the company you are using;
  - Pictures of moving men loading a truck;
  - Photo of the child in his new room;
  - Pictures of the family in front of the new house;
  - Everyone will be tired from helping with the move;
  - At first, everything will not be put away and it will be a mess;
  - Eventually, one room at a time, the new house will be organized and feel like home;
  - You may consider another social story to accompany this one if the child will need to change schools, or programs.

Related Articles:

  - Life Cycle Events
  - What Happens to My Child’s IEP if I Move?

Additional Resources:

  - Social Story on Going to a New School
  - Moving – Blog Self Storage
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