

BY KAREN CHILDRESS

The Trailing Family

A new position is exciting, but moving can be stressful for your spouse and even frightening or depressing for your children. Tips to ensure a smooth and happy transition for everyone.

You've accepted a new job, one that requires relocating. You were wined, dined, and signed, and before you knew it, you were immersed in a new practice.

Meanwhile, your spouse or partner has been tending to the details of moving and is now immersed in unpacking, putting the house in order, getting the family settled, connecting to the new community, and possibly starting a new job of his or her own. It can all be a bit much. Moving is stressful and if isn't handled with careful thought, attention to detail, and a sense of perspective, it can take a toll on the entire family. Whether you're relocating across town or across the country, there are issues to consider and steps to take that can make the move easier on everyone.

A family decision

When you were single—footloose and fancy free, as they say—the decision to relocate and how to go about it was

easy. Do you want to go or not? Rent a truck or hire a moving company? Start socializing the moment you unpack, or get settled in first? When you have a family to consider, it's an entirely different ballgame. Moving is a family decision.

David Miller, MD, along with his wife, Inge, and their two small daughters moved from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to Santa Monica, California in 2006 for David to complete a urologic oncology fellowship at UCLA. David experienced what he calls "a twinge of guilt" about extending his training after a six-year residency and moving his young family across the country. Recognizing the challenges associated with being in a new community and away from familiar support systems, David says he's doing everything he can to make these two years work—for him professionally and for his family. "I'm busy at work and then when I'm home I'm focused on Inge and the kids," says David. "My wife has been extraordinarily supportive and I've redoubled my commitment to the family, which has been great."

Asked what advice he might offer other young couples about to make a move, David doesn't hesitate. "Before you make the decision, think clearly about the implications for both you and your spouse. Explore whether there are substantial reservations on your spouse's part," he says. "Choose your next step so you'll be personally comfort-



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Orthopedic surgeon Chris Hanosh, MD, of Durango, Colorado, has a similar philosophy. He and his wife, DeAnna, and their young daughter moved to Durango from Silver City, New Mexico in 2005. "The stay-at-home person needs to be happy," he says. "I could do my job anywhere, but DeAnna and Abigail need to be happy in the community." DeAnna chimes in with the flip side of her husband's point. "If we loved the community but he hated his job, that wouldn't work either," she says.

An emotional time

According to counselors, moving is not something to take lightly. "Relocation is one of the bigger stressors that individuals and families experience," says marriage and family therapist Greg Miller of Austin, Texas. "You take a new job, you're moving, changing kids' schools—it's a tremendous

amount of change all at once." Miller says it's not uncommon for adults to experience anxiety or depression during this sort of transition. Symptoms to be on the lookout for include irritability, fighting or arguing with your spouse, self-medicating with alcohol or drugs, engaging in addictive behaviors such as gambling or Internet pornography, changes in sleeping or eating patterns, or neglecting healthy activities like exercise.

Unique to moving is the stress caused by leaving your support system behind. "We tell ourselves we're getting a new job, more money, a new house, and we expect that everything will be wonderful. It's not part of our expectation that this move is going to be really difficult.

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✓ **When you were single, the decision to relocate was easy. Do you want to go or not? Rent a truck or hire a moving company? When you have a family to consider, it's an entirely different ballgame.**

MAKING A MOVE

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People don't prepare for it," says Miller. Make moving less emotionally taxing by setting up a support system in advance. "Connect with a therapist, support group, church, or the local version of whatever group you were connected with back home," says Miller. "Approach moving with the expectation that it will probably be difficult, and that you should set up a support system as soon as possible."

Moving can also put a strain on relationships. "When external stressors increase, it puts more pressure on marriages. It's tougher to get along when you're moving into a new house, starting a new job, and have lost your support system. The stress of relocating does cause relationships to end; it's that big," says therapist Miller. He recommends that couples schedule a few counseling sessions at their new location just in case—unless they're moving to a place where they have an extensive support system in place. "It's normal for relocating to be hard and it's okay to get help and support," he says. He reminds physicians that there is no shame in reaching out for help. "Doctors are healers and tend to be a lot better at taking care of other people than at caring for themselves," he says, noting that he sees a number of physicians in his private therapy practice.

Reduce the emotional upheaval that so often accompanies moving by staying aware of what's happening around you. If you find yourself over-reacting to small annoyances, try to catch yourself, take a deep breath, and remind yourself that moving is temporary—that this too shall pass. Soon you'll be unpacked



Greg Miller, Therapist

MOVING TIPS YOU DON'T HEAR EVERY DAY

- ✓ Don't pack canned goods. Replacing them costs less than moving them.
- ✓ Get all your prescriptions refilled (multiple refills if possible) before you move. Use a national pharmacy where refills can be transferred.
- ✓ Number boxes by room and make corresponding signs to tape on the door of each room in the new house. The moving guys won't know Ashley's Room from Jon's Room from Our Room, but they'll know 1, 2, 3.
- ✓ Find a safe, quiet place for your pets on moving day. Moving makes them nervous, too.
- ✓ On moving day, engage a friend, relative, or sitter to take care of your children. "Otherwise, they might get packed in a moving box," says Lockhart.
- ✓ Once you've unpacked, put an ad in the local paper offering "Free Boxes" if the moving company won't come back to get them. You may even be able to sell used boxes.
- ✓ Be aware that if you move in the summer, it's peak season. Movers are heavily booked and you may get an untrained crew (hint: specifically request the "regular" crew) and fewer options for available dates. Plus, high season may mean higher prices.
- ✓ Subscribe to the newspaper of your new city for a few weeks or months before you move so you'll feel "in the loop" when you arrive.
- ✓ Pick up dry cleaning and return library books before you leave town.

Source: Professional Organizer Carolyn Lockhart

and settled into your new community.

Attention to detail

Whether you've moved a dozen times or this is your first major upheaval, "every move is different," says Carolyn Lockhart, the owner of Moving

Matters, LLC in New London, New Hampshire. If you're not the most structured person on the planet, engaging someone like Lockhart could be a smart move. She's a professional organizer who moved 25 times in 32 years while her husband was a career Navy man. "No matter where I am, when I tell someone what I do, it gets a conversation going," says Lockhart. "Everyone has a moving mishap story to share." Careful planning—and a sense of humor—can keep your move from turning into one of those stories.

There are a variety of resources on the Internet that offer comprehensive moving checklists, timelines, and helpful hints and tips to make moving easier. A few of these are:

- www.moving.com
- www.movingcoach.com
- www.mayflower.com
- www.vanlines.com
- www.uhaul.com

Since most practices pay for moving expenses, you'll likely be using a professional moving company. Lockhart says the key is to be proactive. "Don't let movers walk all over you," she says. "It took me a long time to get up the courage to be assertive." One example she gives is asking movers to wash their hands between dismantling the barbecue grill and moving the mattress. Balance getting your needs met with being pleasant, however. "If you treat movers well, have refreshments for them, and see how they're going about their business, you can relax a little bit," says Lockhart.

Keep the phone number for the company handy so that you can call in to track your shipment if anything goes awry. Lockhart remembers having to call a moving company once when an

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employee arrived to load her furniture had alcohol on his breath and was argumentative. “Don’t try to deal with it yourself; ask them to wait in the truck while you call the company,” says Lockhart.

Don’t underestimate the physical toll moving can take. Lockhart says it’s easy to slip into doing “one more thing, then one more thing, and before you know it, it’s 1:00 in the morning.” Pace yourself as you plan and pack and make self-care a priority. As tempting as it may be to grab fast food on the run, try not to slip into unhealthy eating habits while you’re moving. Get enough sleep, take stretch breaks, and breathe.

Whether you’re moving yourself or hiring professionals, make sure you have what you need to function for the first 24 hours in your new home. Clearly label one or two boxes “Unpack First” and don’t let them get lost in the moving shuffle. In these boxes you’ll be happy you have the following: a change of clothes, medications, sheets, pillows, towels, alarm clock, telephone, coffee pot and coffee, paper plates and cups, a roll of paper towels, all-purpose cleaning supplies and rags, trash bags, toilet paper, personal care items, bottled water, snacks, pet food/dish, a small lamp, and if you have children, a few toys or games they can play anywhere.

Getting connected

Establishing connections in a new city can be more challenging than you might imagine, but it’s worth the effort. “Socially, I think moving to a new place with children is easier,” says Inge Miller. She and David have made friends with other parents at their daughter’s preschool as well as with a young couple in their apartment complex. “They just had their first baby and he’s from the Midwest,” says Inge, explaining their

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common interests.

David and Inge also made a conscious decision to take full advantage of their two-year stay on the West Coast. “We try not to let a weekend pass without doing something,” says Inge. The family spends time at the beach and riding their bikes. They’ve driven up the coast to Santa Barbara and wine country, toured the Huntington Gardens in Pasadena, and have taken the children to Disneyland and Lego Land.

Breast surgeon Robin Skrine, MD, moved with her two daughters from Pennsylvania, where she’d practiced for 10 years, to Waco, Texas in 2006. Her husband stayed behind temporarily to sell their house. Skrine says the family has adjusted nicely, in part because they share the values of the people in the area and they have discovered Waco to be a friendly community. “We found a church and made friends there,” says Skrine. “My real estate agent became a friend and has introduced me to people.” On the ability to connect socially, Skrine says that it’s important to know yourself, know your family, know what you’re looking for, and go to an area that will be a good fit. “That’s really what made a difference for us. We fit in here,” she says.

Chris and DeAnna Hanosh had honeymooned in the Durango area and had a few friends and family members nearby. Once they made the move to the area, DeAnna became involved with the local family center where she met other

young mothers. “Having a physician as a husband, you do spend a lot of time by yourself with your children, so you need to find that bond with other women and create a foundation for your children,” says DeAnna.

No matter how quickly you get settled into your new abode, it still takes a while to feel at home in a new community. David Miller recommends patience. “It takes at least six months until you really start feeling like a place is home. When I got to stop thinking about the route I was taking home . . . not until that time did I starting seeing the great things about where I live,” he says. “The first six months are just getting your feet on the ground and not feeling like the ‘new person.’”

For all the stress and anxiety that relocating can cause, it also creates an opening to change your activities, your routine, and even your point of view. “Moving can be very liberating,” says Lockhart. “It gives you the opportunity to get out of a rut.” If there is something you’ve always wanted to try or get involved in, as soon as you’re semi-settled, get out and explore. Join a tennis league or hiking group to meet new people. Volunteer at your children’s school or at the local animal shelter. Become a member of a networking group or book club. Find something that suits you, something that will energize and restore you after the rigors of moving. One caveat, however: Be selective about saying yes. It’s easy to be-

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come overcommitted when you're the new person on the block.

Consider the children

Just as every move is different, every child is unique in how they'll respond to relocating. Some children take it in stride, others view moving as an adventure, and some go kicking and screaming. Parents can make moving easier on children of all ages by talking to them. Seattle child psychologist Doni Kwak, PhD encourages parents to share details of the move with children as soon as those details are known. "More information decreases anxiety," says Kwak. "The idea is to prepare the children, taking into account their developmental age."

Dawn Northup, with West USA Realty in Scottsdale, Arizona, suggests that physician families with children consider moving as early in the summer as possible. This, says Northup, allows time for the little ones to get involved in summer school or recreational programs and meet children their own age before the first day of school.

Once you've committed to a new job, a visit to the community with children in tow prior to the actual move can relieve a lot of anxiety. Northup recommends taking children to visit their new school at some point during the school year prior to a summer move. This lets them begin to anticipate what it will be like. It's hard for kids to think outside their little community," says Northup. "Get them excited about moving somewhere new, make it an adventure." If you can't visit the new community, at a minimum, take photographs of their

new house, school, nearby parks, and other child-friendly amenities.

If a child or teenager appears anxious before, during, or after the move, parents would be well advised to try to find out exactly what the youngster is feeling. "They may be angry," says Kwak, "possibly at you." If you have an idea of what a child's feelings are—anxiety, fear, anger, dread—you have something to work with should they withdraw, regress, or act out. Let the children have their feelings, "but keep the rules and values you've always kept," says Kwak. "They need routine and predictability, especially when they're under stress. During a transitional time, children need even more structure."

Children are flexible and most will adapt in due time to their new home, neighborhood, and school. That doesn't mean, however, that saying goodbye to old friends and familiar surroundings is easy on them. Kwak suggests engaging children in a positive transitional activity such as making a DVD of their old neighborhood, helping them make their own address book so they can keep in touch with friends, or collecting a box of keepsakes to take with them.

If your children don't settle into their new surroundings, establish a routine, and connect with peers within a reason-

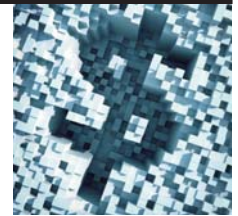
"If you find yourself over-reacting to small annoyances, try to catch yourself, take a deep breath, and remind yourself that moving is temporary—that this too shall pass. Soon you'll be unpacked and settled into your new community."

able time, they may require professional support to help them cope. But Kwak says parents should remember that negative behavior exhibited by children during the course of a move is probably temporary and will likely pass. "Assuming you had a good family life before the move, it will get back to that point. If there were stressors present that weren't dealt with, then a move could exacerbate things," says Kwak.

Attitude and perspective

Moving is no picnic in the park, but it doesn't have to be a traumatic event. You'll be tired, but you don't have to experience debilitating fatigue. You'll be overwhelmed occasionally (okay, a good deal of the time), but you don't have to slip into a full-blown emotional meltdown. Be kind to yourself throughout the moving process. Be gentle with your children. Cut your spouse—and yourself—some extra slack. You'll survive moving by maintaining a positive attitude, laughing at all the little glitches that will surely occur, and keeping things in perspective. ■

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Hidden

RELOCATING EXPENSES

How will relocating affect your finances? Find out before you decide to move.

BY SALLY HERIGSTAD

When physician Connie Corcoran got a new job offer on the West Coast, she and her husband Rodney Brotton were thrilled. They heard Seattle was beautiful, and the new practice would pay their expenses to move from Denver. They researched the cost of living in Seattle. But, Brotton admits, "We did a poor job of it."

"You get used to your surroundings, but 1,200 miles away it's a new deal," he says. "We were really shocked when we started looking at houses here." In fact, after selling their house in Denver, they couldn't buy something comparable in Seattle. And it was almost impossible to find a house with a basement—a given in Denver. "Here, \$250,000 doesn't buy anything. That was a big eye-opener."

Moving to a new opportunity is exciting. Before you accept a distant offer, however, it's better to know what you're getting into. The move itself can cost more than you expect. Even if the new practice or hospital is picking up moving expenses, there are house-hunting trips,

furniture storage, moving the family pets, and sometimes maintaining two households temporarily. It all adds up, and it's worth considering trying to negotiate some of it into the moving expenses as part of your contract before signing.

Then there are the expenses of setting up housekeeping: There's new furniture (somehow the old furniture is never quite right), restocking the pantry, putting down utility deposits, and maybe joining the local gym. It's not always possible to get refunds for memberships and club dues at the old place, either.

Some additional expenses show up after you move. Dr. Cheryl Tan-Jacobson and her husband, Brad, had a new home built in Black Diamond, Washington, approximately 45 miles southeast of Seattle. Everything went pretty much to plan as the house was being built. "The biggest surprise," says Tan-Jacobson, "was how much landscaping costs. You think the house is built and that's it, but we hadn't thought much about the fact that it didn't come with a stitch of landscaping. That cost us." The American Society of Landscape Architects recommends planning to spend 5 percent to 10 percent of the cost of your home on landscaping.

COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS

After the family settles in, the budget is likely to need adjusting. For example, people who move south from a snowy state may be surprised at how much sunbelt dwellers spend just to stay cool, keep the bugs at bay, and maintain year-round landscaping. People who

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PLAN AHEAD – *Don't let these expenses catch you off guard*

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|--|--|---|--------------------------------|
| \$ Moving company or truck rental | \$ Cost to move boats, campers, or trailers (not always taken by the moving company) | \$ Interruptions in salary—yours and/or your spouse's | adapting new home |
| \$ House-hunting and buying trips (possibly several) | \$ Vehicle expenses for trip | \$ Cost-of-living changes | \$ Membership dues |
| \$ Cost of maintaining two houses temporarily | \$ Hotels, food en route and until the kitchen is functioning | \$ Utility deposits | \$ Licensing fees |
| \$ Cost to move pets | | \$ New furniture | \$ Insurance changes |
| | | \$ Costs of upgrading or | \$ Income tax, sales tax |
| | | | \$ Change in business expenses |

Hidden Relocating Expenses

Continued

move north may quickly discover why locals forgo the snow shovel and invest in a gasoline-powered snow blower that costs slightly less than a small car. And the first winter heating bill can be a shock. Plus there is the cost of warm clothing, coats, snow boots, and snowsuits for the kids.

You can plan ahead by comparing cost-of-living rates on line at the Sperling's Best Places Web site (www.bestplaces.net/col/). Don't be surprised if the statistics don't tell the whole story, however. Even little things add up. For example, in Denver, according to Brotton, when you order trash service, it doesn't matter how much you set out. "Here, [in Seattle] they ask you how much trash service you want—one or two barrels. Out there, we had a state income tax. Here, we get taxed on everything, even the second garbage can." Brotton also notes that a [man's] haircut in Denver is \$9; in Seattle it's at least \$12.

Spending expectations vary in different places, too. Fred Dalglish, a gynecologist, discovered when he moved from Maine that doctors in south Florida are "held on a pedestal." He says, "The expectation is there that you project a successful image. Every other doctor who parks in the lot drives a pretty nice car. I drive a 1997 paid-for Saturn."

Business expenses

Fred Dalglish and his wife, Ann, have moved numerous times for opportunities in medicine and public health education. He has sometimes been shocked by the cost of malpractice insurance. He says insurance costs, which can vary dramatically by region, can be almost impossible to research ahead of time. "Nobody wants to give you a quote until you have an address and land in town," he says. "You get a letter in the mail: 'Your premium will be...' and that's it."

Once you settle into a practice, the business expenses can make more of a dent in your income than you expected. According to Dalglish, doctors are often invited to join a practice and offered a good salary to lure them there. Then, "You come to a group practice, and one year later they say 'We think you're doing so well that we're going to take you off your salary.'" From that point on, you are on the "eat what you kill" rule. "You get the income you bring in, minus expenses. To get a really, really good nurse, you pay their health insurance and a Christmas bonus. The group decides how much to charge you for office rent, which will be subtracted from your income. The difference is your paycheck. If the difference between income and expense is enough, you get a bonus. They can adjust the price on the rent, and you may never get that promised bonus. You have some expenses decided for you (the scary part) or you have expenses you do control (equally scary). You have to pay for your nurse, and you may have to buy equipment. If you want a new piece of equipment, you have to buy it yourself or have it applied against your income." Dalglish recommends, "You'd better get your equipment in the first year during the honeymoon period."

According to Tan-Jacobson, in most cases, going off salary on production is a good thing. She says physicians usually stay on salary longer than one year; in any case, you should agree on the period of time before you move. "Some people can choose to stay on salary, but for most people, going on production is more desirable. Unless you build your practice slowly, it is to your advantage to be paid on production." Also, once you buy into a partnership, you have a say in what the rules are.

WEIGHING THE COSTS VS. BENEFITS

The good news is that sometimes higher costs

in one budget category are offset by savings in another. Despite the higher cost of living in Washington, Corcoran and Brotton at least save money on transportation; Corcoran lives five miles from her practice. They also spend less on heating bills, and they found a house in their price range by purchasing a 1982 home that needed updating. It even has the basement they wanted, and Brotton is remodeling the house room by room.

Sometimes, additional expenses or perhaps a higher cost of living are a small price to pay for professional satisfaction and opportunity. When he lived in Maine, Dalglish found that he couldn't make enough to pay the bills as a gynecologist if he didn't deliver babies. Even though the cost of housing in Ft. Lauderdale is high, he and his wife have no regrets about moving. Dalglish now works at the Holy Cross Medical Group in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. He says, "It's the best of both worlds. No babies, straight salary, no [personal involvement in] insurance companies or malpractice insurance. I sleep through the night, and I get a paycheck every two weeks." Holy Cross is a prestigious group and the largest in town, and Dalglish was thrilled to be chosen from 30 applicants. "It was very worth the move."

Whether it's little things like discovering that you have to pay extra for the second garbage can, or bigger things like having to pay dearly for qualified nursing help, it seems moving always costs more than predicted. The new opportunity, however, can be well worth it. The important thing is to know as much as possible about what you're getting into so you can make the best decisions for you and your family. ■
Sally Herigstad, CPA, is the author of *Help! I Can't Pay My Bills* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2006)