



A Different Perspective on Moving

When seniors are facing critical transitional periods in their lives, such as the move out of their family home, it helps to know what is good to focus on. You have probably seen their overwhelmed expressions and wished for reassuring words to share.

Experience can tell us something useful, and over my life I have learned a few things about moving that may assist your family. I grew up in a Foreign Service family, my husband worked in the Foreign Service, and we moved three times after his retirement. My entire life has been spent moving from place to place. Here's what it taught me.

When I was growing up, during a move, my father seemed the least bothered by the transition. Emotionally, it was harder on my mother and still harder on me. Later, as an adult, I discovered that I got progressively better at handling the challenges of moving. Yet, my husband seemingly experienced the least strain of anyone. So, what was going on?

Upon closer scrutiny, one factor readily jumped out which gave a clear advantage to both my father and my husband. By virtue of being **assigned to a specific position** in a new post for their work, both were given an **identity** prior to the move. In the new locale, they had a function with defined tasks, a set of colleagues, and a purpose to fill. While they too would be experiencing the normal stresses and blues of relocation, they had specific things to do, goals and expectations, and a variety of strong motivators.

Our lives are built to a great extent around the basic necessities that define us, no matter where we are. While finding the right home in just the right location is critical, it's also true that finding the right doctor, dentist, hairdresser, clothing store, grocery store, and coffee shop are very important. And, after it becomes routine to trek back and forth to these new places, we begin to have that feeling of being **settled**.

Recently, we both left our jobs in a different state and selected the Northwest as our new home. The transition went surprisingly well. What did we do? We canvassed trusted contacts and identified doctors, a dentist, and a veterinarian. We motored around the area extensively to become acquainted with just where we were on this planet. We volunteered for organizations that were a good match for our backgrounds and experiences, so that we could contribute in a way that made good use of our skills and interests.

Experience has taught me that transitions present challenges for all of us. When our senior loved one sells the family home and is moving into a new assisted living community, they can take proactive decisions to make it smoother and even enjoyable. They can:

- Recognize and accept that all transitions are bumpy at times
- Actively identify local and reliable sources for their basic necessities
- Join an organization or social group that meets regularly and has meaning to them
- Volunteer where they can make good use of their skills and interests
- Define purposes and goals in the new location that they can work towards

While there is no magic formula to eliminate the inevitable downsides, we can help them take steps to reduce the impact and shorten the adaptation period, and begin a new "assignment" that brings meaning and hope to their lives.

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