



Moving Overseas with a Teen

Dina Zavrski-Makaric of *Challenging Directions* wrote an article, [Moving with a Teen](#), that offers tips on preparing your teenagers for a move abroad. Here's her article:

Getting your teenager to leave their home, school and most importantly their friends is not going to be easy. One thing to avoid is to ignore their feelings and pretend that you are the boss and they have to do as you say. You will only create an additional challenge before, during and particularly after you move overseas.

Being aware of what to expect is the first step. Planning ahead, some extra effort and lots of patience will further help in convincing your teenager to move. Having a good relationship with your teen is important at any time and particularly critical at the time of big changes when it can ensure a smooth(er) transition through ups and downs.

Relocation does not happen overnight, and you will have plenty of time to engage with your teenager in minimizing their anxiety and getting their 'buy in' at some stage.

Some Tips:

- Sometimes your teen will react angrily and in disagreement even though they don't really object to the move. The only thing they object may be that they were not consulted or not told soon enough. Don't let your teen's disagreement deter you from relocating; however, engage them as soon as you start contemplating the move. That way they'll feel part of the process, even though they may not wholeheartedly agree to it. At least they will not be able to accuse you of 'never having been told that you were thinking of moving'.
- If a teenager starts to complain and present numerous reasons why you shouldn't relocate overseas, it is important that you listen to them. Listening without arguing or making a point will show them that you are concerned about their feelings. Say that you understand how they feel, and you will take it into account.
- Plan the move around school semester breaks, if possible during the long summer break.
- If your teen is in their last school year consider leaving them with relatives or a good friend. Relocation will not only disrupt their social networks, but more importantly their academic performance. It is not worth it. Your teen can always join you once the school finishes, and visit you during the holidays.
- Scheduled times in advance when your teen can return to visit their friends and family left behind. That way the permanency of relocation will not appear so overwhelming.
- Before the move, give your teen some tasks to find out about the new country and town you are moving in. Your teen will feel involved, less anxious, and it will also help you learn about your new surrounding.
- During the move ask your teen to participate in packing. If you worry that they will not do it 'right', then assign a task that even if not performed to your standards will be helpful. At the time of relocation any help is welcome!
- If you also have a younger child, ask your teen to assist you by looking after them during the move. This will be of great help to you and will give your teen a sense of responsibility that their forming adult is so much in need of.

- Ensure that your teen has plenty of ways to communicate with their friends. Today this is so easy by using the Internet, Skype, mobile phone and sms. A digital camera is a great way of keeping connected by taking photos and sending to friends. It will give a teen something creative and constructive to do and take pride in.
- Once you come to the new location, encourage your teen to get involved in activities, whether at school or outside of it. You know their interests, maybe there are some that have been neglected and now it is the time to re-visit them. Mixing with people with similar interests will facilitate formation of new social networks.