

## Teen help: Preparing to move to a new town



Advice writer and educator Erin Russell Thiessen shares these tips for teens preparing to make the big move...

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Finding out that you have to move can really shake up your world. There are many changes to be faced all at once, and some pretty huge questions loom: *Will I fit in at my new school? Will I make good friends? What if everything is so different that I will never feel I belong? Will I lose touch with my friends back home?*

When facing a change this big, it's often helpful to do some preparation to ready yourself for the new challenge. Remember that this move can bring a lot of good outcomes, too. Below we list some steps that will help you as you prepare to make the best of this huge change.

### 1. Spend some time getting to know yourself

In preparing for a major shift like moving cities, it's a good idea to sit down and get to know yourself bit better. What do you like about yourself? List your qualities -- your sense of humor, your friendly smile, or your caring heart, for example.

What do your friends like best about you? Remind yourself that you have a lot to offer and a move allows you share all that with a new group of people.

In working on getting to know yourself, also pay attention to what kinds of activities you enjoy doing. Make a list of clubs you've enjoyed being a part of. What activities have you not enjoyed in the past, but joined in because all your friends did?

Once you move, you can apply this self-knowledge right away by looking for clubs, hangouts and events in your new city that interest you. Remember, if you get out there and do the activities you love, you'll meet like-minded friends who will "get" you.



### 2. See this as an opportunity to make changes in your life

This is a time to be honest about changes you'd like to make in your life. Being a total stranger in a new town is a great opportunity to reinvent yourself.

You may want to examine what negative behaviors or shortcomings keep cropping up for you and whether you can address them and try to act in new ways.

Since everyone has shortcomings, you don't need to beat yourself up over them. Just ask yourself whether you could make some different choices in a new town to be the best version of yourself that you can be.

For example, do classmates have a specific image of you that is unfair and does not reflect who you really are at the core? Think about how your own behavior might have contributed to that image.

I knew one teen who kept acting like a "dumb blonde" in front of all the guys at her old school, even though she secretly got really good grades. She told me she just felt shy admitting she was smart. When she moved to a new town, she decided to just be honest about who she was from the start and she found she got a lot more respect-- from everyone.

### **3. Keep in contact with your current friends**

Many teens withdraw from their friends and social circles when they find out they'll be moving. It might feel very easy to isolate from the people who love and support you. And you might reason that it's not like you're going to see them very often once you've moved anyhow.

It is important, however, to keep ties with healthy and supportive friends in your life, no matter how far you'll eventually be separated in terms of distance. Facebook, email and Skype make it easy to stay in touch with people and it's essential to your sense of wellbeing to know that you still have friends and roots back home.

Make an effort to keep hanging out with your best friends and remember to keep in touch after you move.

### **4. Express what you're feeling**

It's normal to have all sorts of feelings right now--from anger to excitement and everything in between. It is important to accept that you're going to go through some strong emotions.

Try to pay attention to what you're feeling without judging yourself as weak etc. for feeling this way. Find a friend, counselor, spiritual leader or family member you trust and share these feelings with them. It's important not to keep the swirl of thoughts and feelings bottled up inside.

### **5. Get to know your family--especially your siblings**

OK, I know what you're thinking, but I've heard from several teens that they really saw a new side of their brother or sister while hanging out together in the first few weeks after they moved.

Spending time together can be especially helpful if you move during the summer before school starts and you get a chance to meet new people. It's alright if you two stop hanging out as much once you start making your own friends.

Remember, too, that your brother or sister might be just as nervous as you are right now and might need your extra kindness during this time. It feels good to know you're needed (even just a little).

### **6. Surf the internet and get informed**

Get more information about the city or country you're moving to. What do teens your own age do for fun in your new town? What are the schools like there? Will there be any major cultural differences awaiting you? Scan the web for ideas/articles on how to make new friends once you've moved.

Following these steps may require a bit of work, but they are guaranteed to smooth the way ahead. Remember that you can return to any step you find helpful even once you've moved.

Change is never easy but it can bring a lot of good things--the chance to meet new friends, new romantic interests, and the opportunity to reinvent yourself. So see this move as an opportunity to get out there, get involved, and start your exciting new life!

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