

Moving on after moving in

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Source: Just Between Us

If you have recently moved, or will be moving in the near future, I want to encourage you. From one who has traveled that road by relocating 14 times, I know the emotional journey ahead of you. I also know that moving will touch every aspect of your life.

Our bags were packed and our van was loaded down with valuables that couldn't be shipped ahead. The rest of my life was loaded in brown boxes on a moving truck headed for a destination 2,000 miles away. Once again I was pulling up stakes. Once again I was saying goodbye to all that I knew and loved. At that moment, I didn't belong anywhere – not in this place, and not in the new place I was moving to so far away.

I smiled for the children's sake, to give them a sense of security that everything was going to be all right. I engaged in some "meaningful" conversation with my husband, Bill, to assure him I was indeed standing by his side in this job transfer and was united with him in this move. The emptiness overwhelmed me.

Moving is so much more than loading and unloading boxes! Moving means change, and change can affect you physically, emotionally, and even spiritually. It will have an effect on your marriage, your children, your relationships, and your job, because along with any transition comes change. Moving can be compared to a thousand piece picture that has been turned upside down and it's up to you to put the puzzle back together again.

When you move, you leave behind all that is familiar to face the unknown. Many women feel like their whole life is in brown boxes and the effort to start all over again is overwhelming. You are disconnected from family, friends, and your church home. You lose a sense of community. Until you begin to put down roots in a new place and reconnect through relationships, loneliness is all you know. A friend who recently moved said, "The hardest thing about moving is being alone and not having a good friend nearby to be with or call."

You might feel separated from family and friends, but you are not separated from God. He didn't bring you to this new place to abandon you. God can do great things in your moving journey, if you choose to let Him work in and through your life during this transition. "For I know the plans I have for you...to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Perhaps you need hope and encouragement to get you through the major impact of a move. This is what helped me emotionally survive and understand the process of adjustment. It all began with the choice to either be open or closed to change.

The first step I had to take was to choose to let go and leave behind any encumbrances that would prevent me from starting over and moving ahead with my life. Finally, I had to choose to

move ahead. It was time to come full circle with my move, put aside my pity party, and do whatever it took to move ahead. I quickly learned the journey after a move is one of action.

To encourage you on your journey, try these action steps to smooth the bumpy road ahead:

Stop and smell the flowers along the way. Take time to be good to yourself! Schedule some self-care by taking a break to rest, restore, and renew your mind and body.

Ask for help. Don't be a loner and feel like you have to do it all by yourself. Let others be a part of the relocation process with you.

When the heat is up, stay cool. When stress is rising and the pressure is on, keep a sense of humor and be flexible.

It's okay to cry if you want to. With change comes loss and grieving. Your release valve may be tears.

Rise to the occasion. Stretch beyond your comfort zone. Embrace the changes this move brings as opportunities to learn and grow personally.

Take each day one step at a time. Remember the saying, "Rome was not built in a day!" Some days you may feel like you've taken two steps backwards and only one step forward. You can do it! Don't lose heart and never give up!

Let's take this one step further. If you feel like you haven't settled in yet, there are some practical things you can do to help ease the transition of being new. Whether you are lonely, looking for new friends, or just want to reconnect in the community, here are some ways to help you put down roots and begin to bloom where you are planted!

VOLUNTEER. You can always find an organization or a church that needs your time and presence. Join up and join in! This is a great way to meet new people and feel needed at the same time.

GARAGE SALES. Be up and ready to hit the garage sales on Friday and Saturday mornings. You can learn your way around your new town and have fun doing it.

NEIGHBORHOOD COFFEE. Send invitations to everyone in your neighborhood. Set up coffee and goodies in the driveway on a Saturday morning and put out a welcome sign.

OFFER YOUR HOME. Have neighborhood meetings, school meetings, church meetings, or any kind of gathering to bring people together for a purpose.

PERSONAL CARDS. Instead of business cards, make some small personal cards (on the computer) to give out to new friends. Include the names of everyone in your family, along with address and phone. This is helpful for your children too, especially when they can't remember their new address yet!

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT. Consider taking a class to expand your interests, joining a book club, or taking lessons in something you want to learn how to do.

WALK. It's good for the body and the mind!

ASK QUESTIONS. This is a great way to start a conversation. Everybody loves to give their opinion of the best grocery stores, restaurants, and shopping places.

EXPLORE. In other words, get up and check out your new surroundings. Sitting at home all the time isn't good for you emotionally or physically. There are lots of places to go and things to see. Just do it!

DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF. There is always someone whose circumstances are harder than yours.

The anchor and firm foundation in any change and transition in my life has been my relationship with Jesus Christ. His promise of hope through Scripture, the assurance of His comfort, the peace that comes from trusting Him, and the knowledge that He will always be with me, have sustained me over the years in even the most difficult changes I have faced.

Remember that you may feel lonely, but you are never alone! God always accompanies you, wherever you may go. "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you: He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

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