

Change deeply affects how we feel and act! Change IS scarier for some of us than for others. Even *good* change can be *terrifying*. There are many common events that can feel scary to a child such as:¹

- Moving
- New Baby
- New Marriage/New Relationships
- New Schools
- Divorce
- Military Deployment

Children handle change with BIG emotions. And some of these emotions may cause actions that seem out of place. Their *emotions* and *actions* may seem unconnected, but if your children have changes happening in their lives, these emotions are normal.

Anger

Our kids often express anger in place of the feelings they haven't learned to talk about. If your child is feeling insecure, you might see this through *whining*, clinginess, or avoidance. You can teach them to use *words* to express these feelings.

It is very important not to overreact to emotional outbursts. I find it best to take a moment and let my initial reaction slide away, then replace it with a response that has taken into account their big emotions in the situation.

Regression

It is possible that young children may lose some newly acquired skills during times of change. They may go back to baby-talk or start wetting their beds or their pants.

Even though our kids can't be a part the decisions for change, here's how we can make them feel included:⁴

- **Prepare them in advance.** Give them time to *prepare*, as well as time to *accept* the change.
- **Talk and listen.** Letting them talk, without any judgment, helps them feel heard and understood. If we let them express their anger, their fear, or their grief over the change, then they begin to learn to manage their feelings.
- **Support their feelings.** Feelings are REAL, no matter how irrational they may seem. You can't just turn them off and neither can your kids. Children need the *freedom* to safely express their feelings without judgment. Support them by saying, "I'm sorry you're afraid or sad" and "We'll get through this because we're a family." Don't ignore or discount how they feel.⁵
- **Involve them.** Find ways to involve your child in whatever change is happening so that he doesn't feel left out.
- **Stay connected** to the friends and family they are leaving.
- **Check out the new town.** Tour their new school. Find new parks and activities for kids to make the new adventure more familiar and less frightening.

Change can feel like you're leaving earth behind, along with everything you hold dear. But change is a part of life that we must learn to deal with. As parents, it is our job to teach our kids how to manage their emotions, help them to express their feelings and put words to them, and don't overreact when it seems like they do. Look for ways to include them in the change and finally, be sure to give them lots of love and comfort. Because no matter where you go, no matter what changes take place, you're still family.

Resources include:

1. American Academy of Pediatricians. Helping Children Adjust to a Move. Found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Helping-Children-Adjust-to-a-Move.aspx>, accessed 1/8/2019.
2. Australian Government Department of Social Services. Raising Children Network. Dealing with Disrespectful Teenage Behavior. Found at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disrespectful_behaviour_teenagers.html, accessed 1/8/2019.
3. Australian Government Department of Social Services. Raising Children Network. Brain Development: Teenagers. Found at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/brain_development_teenagers.html, accessed 1/8/2019.
4. Lyness, D., PhD. The Nemours Foundation. Helping Kids Cope With Stress. Found at <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress-coping.html>, accessed 1/8/2019.
5. Landbury, J. 2014. No Bad Kids, Toddler Discipline without Shame. JLM Press. Pg 12.