



Helping Children Cope with Change

Life is about change and how we deal with both the expected and unexpected changes affects how our children feel and cope day to day. As parents, when change occurs or is unexpected your often stable situation becomes new and stressful. The following are some tips to help you and your children rebalance life after a change has occurred.

Take stock of the situation: Look at the situation and decide what you have control over and what the change means to you and your family. If the change will have a serious impact on your family, you may need to make a plan to deal with the change to help your family transition to this new way of life. Making a plan of action can help you to feel more in control and less stressed by the situation.

Take time to grieve: It takes time to adjust to the loss of something familiar in your life. Grieving is part of learning to cope with a new situation.

Avoid making major decisions until your life has become more settled: Some decisions have to be made quickly, such as housing and school arrangements for the children, however many decisions can be delayed until things are more settled.

Keep a familiar routine for yourself and your children: It is very important to have a sense of stability during times of change. This is especially important for your children: the more their world stays the same, the better they will be able to cope with the changes they will have to make.

Talk with your children: Talk openly about how they perceive the change will affect their lives. Allow them to express their feelings. Explore ways you can assist them in making the change easier for them.

Practice a healthy lifestyle: Often during periods of change, we may try to compensate by eating, drinking or using tobacco. These activities are often short-term comfort measures and may lead to more problems down the road. Try other coping strategies such as exercise, yoga, healthy eating and making connections with others.

Seek others support: Ask for support from family, friends, co-workers or seek professional counseling or support groups.

Change is everywhere around us and is a normal part of life. Change helps us grow, become who we are and move forward with life. Change can be very stressful even if it is positive. Taking steps to deal with change will help you and your children feel more confident and build skills and strengths that will benefit you in the future.

Adapted from *Changing Course: Managing Life's Transitions* Sheppell.fgi & The Canadian Mental Health Association <http://www.cmha.ca/>