

Families in Transition

A family move is a life changing event, which can be incredibly exciting and positive, as well as challenging. Whether you are just arriving in Uganda or about to leave, we are here to help you navigate this big transition. If you have any questions or would like to talk further, please don't hesitate to contact the ISU School Counselors:

- ISU Junior School Counselor - jscounselor@isumal.ac.ug
- ISU Senior School Counselor- sscounselor@isumail.ac.ug

The Transition Process:

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| Involvement  | <p>The comfortable place that we achieve when we have been in a place for a while. Involvement includes having secure friends and activities.</p> |
| Leaving  | <p>Accepting that the family will be saying goodbye to the familiar. Look at the transition realistically and optimistically. Preparing for the move, saying goodbyes and remaining hopeful of what's to come.</p> |
| Transition  | <p>You cannot completely avoid the chaos and confusion of the transition process. You can keep in mind that it's normal and will pass. There are ways to maintain some sense of equilibrium and connectedness:</p> <p>Sacred Objects: Sacred objects are reminders that there are stable things in one's life amidst the general chaos. Meaningful things that you can carry with you from one place to the next (teddy bear, favorite book, etc).</p> <p>Pictures: Photographs of family, friends, home, pets, representing significant highlights of your past life and location gives you a safe place to visit when you need a few reflective moments in the middle of chaos.</p> <p>Grief: You will mourn the loss of people and things left behind, as well as the familiarity you once had. Do not stuff these feelings away - even if you need to shelve them now and again to make it through the day, be sure to come back to them and take time to think about your journey. Create rituals to consciously acknowledge and mourn your family losses.</p> |
| Entering  | <p>Chaos may remain for several days/weeks after arriving. Don't wait for the community to reach out to you - proactively help yourself and your children to establish yourselves in the new communities. Find mentors who can help you/your children. Pay attention to culture shock/stress - in yourself and your children. Talk and listen!</p> |

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF UGANDA



Re-involvement



Settle into your new environment and accept people and places for who and what they are. This doesn't mean that you will necessarily like everything you find, but you can start to see *why* people do what they do, rather than only *what* they do. You will soon begin to have a sense of belonging and a feeling that your presence matters. You will begin to focus on the present rather than hoping for the future or constantly reminiscing about the past.

How parents can help their children cope better with a big move:

- Discuss the changes your family is encountering in your new environment and teach your children to be observant, respectful and open to these differences.
- Reassure your children that even though there are differences between their old home and new home, there will always be similarities as well. As human beings, we all wish to be treated with kindness and respect.
- Observe possible mood and behavioral changes and be open-minded about possible negative feelings. Acceptance is the best way when dealing with children's negative feelings. Most of the time, children deal better with challenging situations when these feelings are acknowledged, supported and talked about openly.
- Spend time talking about the effects of moving and watch out for emotions children display during these discussions. Reassure your children that their emotions are normal – many people will suffer some level of grief during such a big change. It is important to help them find ways to cope with changes. For example, let them make some simple decisions at home, such as decorating their new bedrooms, choosing what's for dinner once a week, or setting up a fun play area in their yard. Get in touch with your children's new teachers to check on their progress in school.
- Be conscious that children often emulate their parent's emotions. If mom, dad or another adult figure seems frustrated, sad, or angry, the children will internalize this and act similarly. Whereas if adults are positive, optimistic and relaxed about this transition, the children will likely have an easier time adjusting.
- Give your children a way to contact their old friends and family members abroad (such as a secure way to email, skype, make a phone calls or text message).
- Try to keep many daily routines the same as they were before the move, and slowly integrate new activities into their lives. Spend time exploring local places, engage in hobbies and activities your child enjoys, and make new friends. Try finding a new favorite restaurant or playground and join local families in celebrating local holidays are just some activities that help in the transition.
- Last but not least, as parents we must remember to takes good care of ourselves physically, emotionally and mentally so we can help our children through this transition.

Resources:

<http://www.inourchangingworld.com/resources.html>

<https://fausa.org/repatriate/third-culture-kids-resources/>

<https://www.interactionintl.org/bookschildrentcknew.asp>

<https://globallygrounded.com/resources/>

(Hannah Gray, Francesca Ferrari)