

# Healthy Living Feature How To Adapt To A New City

By KAREN ASP

On average, people move 11.7 times in their lifetime. From 2007 to 2008 alone, 34 million people relocated to a new town, city or state, according to the United States Census Bureau. No matter where you go, moving is never easy, even if you're going voluntarily. After all, you're uprooting your life and giving up the familiar for the unfamiliar, so it's no wonder that relocation ranks as the third most stressful life event after death and divorce, according to the Employee Relocation Council. Of course, no move is ever without hiccups, but if you can keep your head screwed on, you'll sail through the move with a little more ease. How? Heed the advice of two life coaches, who offer tips for easing into this life change.

## **Evaluate your beliefs about change.**

Do you interpret change as negative or positive? "You can have a whole range of emotions associated with moving, and by doing this self-inventory, you'll be able to identify what's creating any resistance to change," says Toni Galardi, Ph.D., psychotherapist and life coach in Santa Monica, Calif. and author of "The LifeQuake Phenomenon."

## **Frame the move to your advantage.**

If you can turn the move to your advantage, viewing it as an opportunity versus a setback, you'll have an easier time adapting. "The most resilient people can take a setback and reframe it to emphasize the positive," says Caroline Adams Miller, MAPP, professional coach and happiness expert in Bethesda, Md., and author of "Creating Your Best Life." For instance, view this as your chance to make new friends, start a new career to take up different hobbies.

## **Prioritize your health.**

To keep stress from escalating, eat healthy and exercise regularly. Of course, this is important even if you're not moving, but it's

especially critical during this transition time, Galardi says.

## **Establish clear-cut goals.**

When you have a goal, you have a roadmap for change, and research shows that people who have short- and long-term goals are the happiest," Miller says, adding that you should set goals for at least the first three months to help you transition into your new setting. For example, maybe you decide to learn two new things about your new city every week.

## **Find a happy neighborhood.**

"Studies show that you're more likely to be happy if you live in a happy neighborhood with happy neighbors," Miller says. Although you can talk with the neighbors to find out if the neighborhood or apartment complex has a happy vibe, you can also look for gardens or well-tended pieces of land, dog parks, a swimming pool, clubhouse or any place you can socialize. The happiest people, after all, have vibrant social networks, Miller says.

Happy people also exercise frequently so see if there are bike or walking trails nearby or even sidewalks that run through the neighborhood, thus allowing the possibility of frequent get-togethers.

## **Seek like-minded people.**

If you have children, you may have an easier time meeting people. Yet if you're single or self-employed, you need to be more creative about finding friends, Galardi says. One solution? Seek clubs or groups that nurture your interests.

## **Don't overwhelm yourself with choices.**

You have a million things to decide in your new city — like what dentist to go to, where to buy groceries, what pet groomer to use, and so on. Ask people you meet for their

recommendations or pick up a local newspaper or magazine that may run lists of the top doctors, pet groomers and whatever else you may be looking for. Just don't get so bogged down by trying to find the "best" of everything that you sift through dozens of choices. Do that and you'll never be satisfied, Miller says.

Instead, follow the lead of the happiest people, per several studies, and narrow the field to three choices per decision. Then make your pick from that pot.

## **Stick with soothing rituals.**

Whether it's journaling, doing yoga or practicing the piano, these rituals help ground you and give you balance amidst the chaos. Of course, realize that things may be too crazy for you to do your ritual every day, but make time for it as often as possible, Galardi says.

## **Avoid relying on your partner as a social director.**

It's tempting to let your significant other make new friends for you, especially if socializing isn't your strength. Yet this could place additional stress on your relationship with your partner, Galardi says. Instead, seek friends on your own.

## **If you have children, start a new habit like the Gratitude Exercise.**

This simple, research-tested exercise requires listing three things you're grateful for every day, along with why they happened to you. Why is the why important? "It causes you to take ownership of what happened to you," Miller says. Do this every night with your children, and they'll become more optimistic about their new surroundings, especially since they may be suffering from stress due to adjusting to a new school and having to make friends.

## **Look for volunteer opportunities.**

By volunteering, you'll get what Miller calls the helper's high, making you feel happier and better about yourself. Plus, volunteering will help you connect with your community.