

The Emotional Side of Moving

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Be Well at Work - Employee Assistance

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Relocation Stress

- The challenges of moving do not end when the moving van pulls away.
- Stress may increase *after* you have settled in to your new job or new home.
- Moving may ignite a sense of adventure and excitement – but it also is associated with stress that affects us both physically and emotionally.

Signs and Symptoms

Physical Symptoms

- Backaches
- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Fatigue (even after unpacking!)
- Decreased immune system response
- Panic attacks

Emotional Symptoms

- Irritability
- Moodiness
- Impatient
- Easily frustrated
- Crying often
- Inability to focus

How we feel, both physically and emotionally, impacts our behaviors!

Emotional Dichotomies

Even if you were excited about moving to a new place, it's also common to feel a mix of emotions:

- Grief and loss
- A new sense of belonging
- Guilt
- Excitement
- Resentment
- Sadness
- Happiness
- Craving support
- Fear of commitment



Expectations vs. Reality

- Moving can be filled with a lot of expectations and fantasies
 - Berkeley's prestige
 - Living in the San Francisco Bay Area
 - The weather
- Expectations don't always align with reality
 - Budget cuts
 - Deep layers of bureaucracy
 - Traffic and the high cost of living
 - Difficulty finding housing or change in living arrangement



Loss vs. Sense of Belonging

- For some, it's easy to find a new community, friends and create a “new family.”
 - This is typically easier for the employees because of the built-in community within the workplace
- For others, it may take time to adjust to the grief and loss of leaving friends, family, and your hometown.
 - Loss of familiarity
 - Loss of routine
 - Grief over missing important family moments

Guilt vs. Excitement

- Moving can be exciting and new:
 - Adventures
 - Friends
 - Places to see
 - Expanding your career path
- However, the excitement can lead to guilt:
 - Making new friends can cause rifts in old friendships
 - Concept of “moving on”
 - Going out with new friends or colleagues while family is at home
 - Watching loved ones struggle with settling down in a new environment



Resentment

For partners	For employees
Having to go along as the “trailing” partner	Work/life balance
Possibly sacrificing more	Anger directed towards you as the “cause” of unhappiness
Hearing how easily the employee meets new people	Meeting everyone’s expectations
Accusatory – blaming spouse for the change; hiding true feelings (feeling like you <i>have</i> to be happy)	Defensive – receiving blame and hearing attacks

Dyad Exercise

Break into pairs or small groups:

Reflect on the biggest challenges and pleasant surprises of your transition to the Bay Area.

Any coping strategies you found helpful?

Support

- Everyone seeks support differently.
 - Verbalize the need
 - Solitude and time to reflect
 - Seek touch and comfort
- Some may turn to friends and family back home for support more often than initially anticipated.
 - Many types of communication can help you maintain strong ties to people you care about
- Seek support from those who you love and trust.
 - Ask a relative or close friend to visit you
 - Keep active in organizations and activities



Visiting Home

- People look at you differently – you are now the “one who lives in San Francisco.”
 - This is especially true if coming from overseas
- It may be difficult to indicate true emotions.
 - Admitting it is not going well may be seen as a sign of weakness
 - Admitting the transition is going well may make you feel guilty of “moving on”
- Adjusting to being the visitor and being surrounded by family and friends 24/7.
- Expectations to visit *everyone*.
 - Book one table at a restaurant and invite a group of friends vs. trying to see each individually

Moving with Children

- Although children can experience relocation stress in much the same way as adults, they often lack the ability to put problems in perspective.
- It's often helpful to:
 - Let your child know it's ok to be anxious or miss old friends and the previous school.
 - Allow your child have certain choices such an activity or even bedroom paint color
 - Make things very concrete to help visualize
 - Give your child time to adjust
 - Acknowledge frustration and sadness – and even agree

Moving with a Teenager

- Moving tends to be the toughest for a teenager.
 - In a vulnerable time of life regardless of moving
 - In midst of gaining independence
 - Friendships are critical
 - It may be especially difficult if they are romantically involved
- Your teenager may be moody, withdrawn, overly focused on friends back home or rebellious.
 - Try to acknowledge the pain without condoning behavior that may hurt the family
- Anticipate new setbacks and struggles.



Moving Alone

- If you moved here alone, you may experience increased loneliness.
- Loneliness is often hard to recognize because it may be masked by other emotions.
 - Many people may feel “depressed” by moving. However, they may actually be experiencing loneliness



Tips to Reduce Loneliness

- Acknowledge your loneliness
- Know that it is okay to feel lonely at times
- Learn to enjoy time alone
- Reach out to others
- Set realistic goals
- Get involved in activities that you are familiar with
- Be willing to accept small flaws or differences in others



No matter how often you move, you still take yourself with you

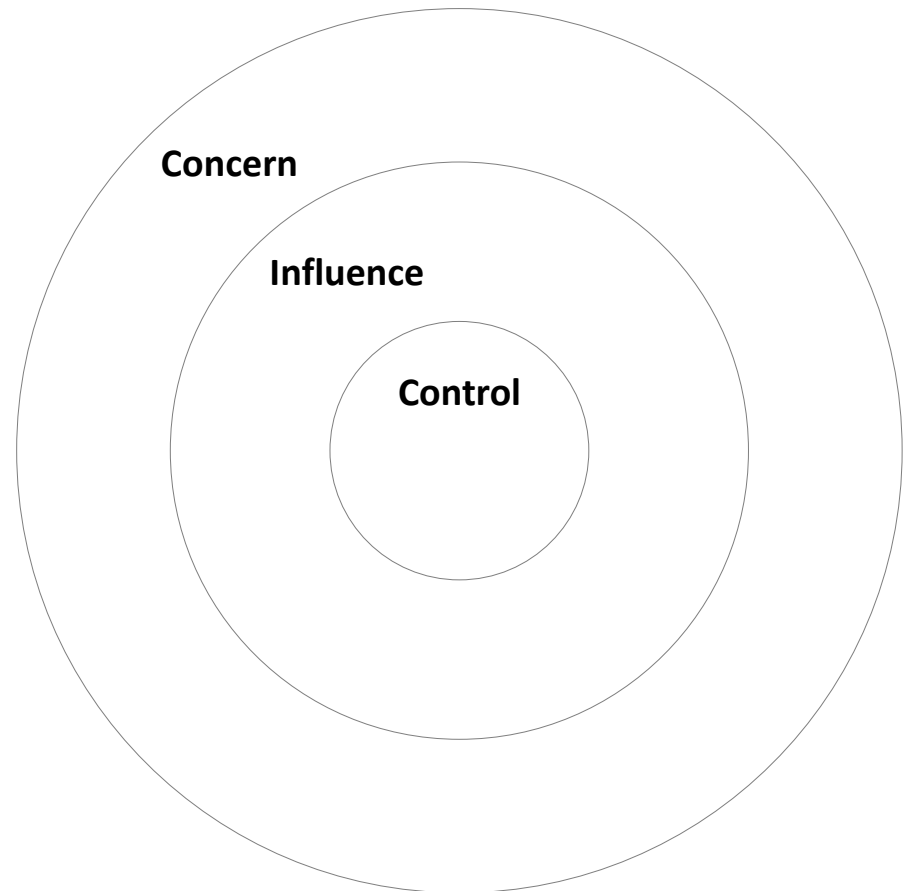
Resilience

- Resilience is the ability to bounce back from life circumstances or situations that initially appear disruptive or overwhelming.
 - Ability to absorb and process change while enhancing personal growth
 - Ability to be flexible and adaptable
- Pause and reflect on previous life circumstances you have overcome in your past.
 - What characteristics or actions helped you through tough times?



Gaining a Sense of Control

“Grant me the ability to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

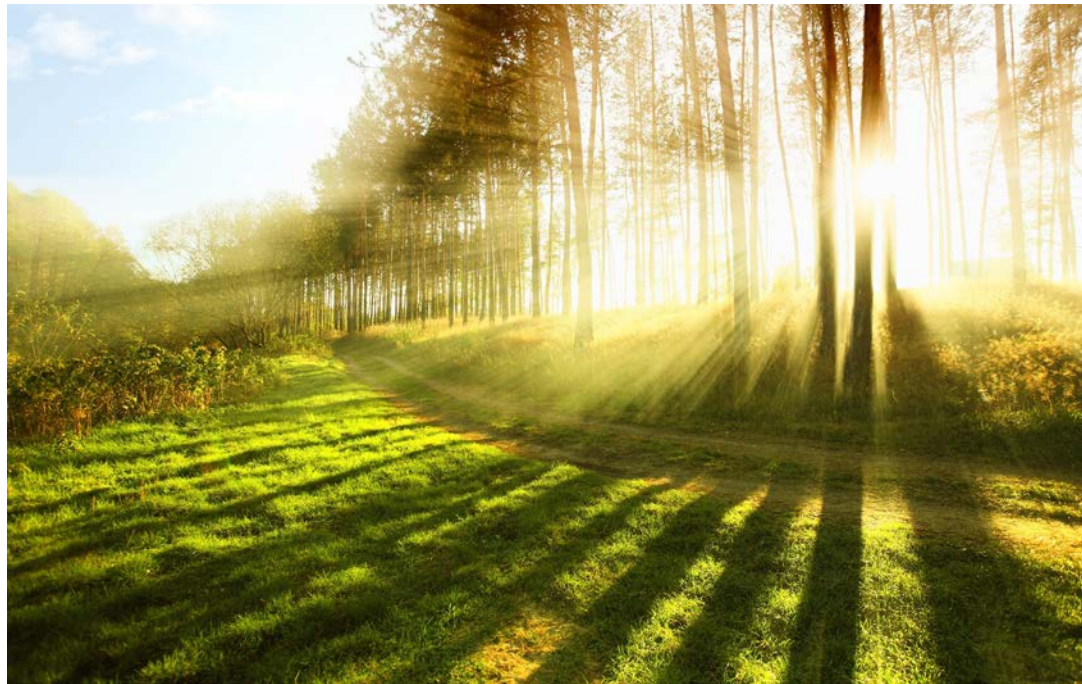


Self-care

- It's important not to abandon healthy habits you may have had before you moved.
- Engage in physical exercise to release stress hormones.
- Be mindful of other sources of stress.
 - Try not to start a new diet or begin an emotionally consuming project if you have recently moved
- Give yourself permission to experience sudden emotions.
- Engage in relaxation exercises.
 - Meditation, yoga, deep breathing, visualization
- Be patient!

Deep breathing exercise

- Sit back in your chair and relax. You're welcome to close your eyes or keep them open.



Campus Resources

- Employee Assistance
 - Confidential assessment and referral counseling services for employees and dependents (over age 18). Call 510-643-7754 during 8 am – 5 pm weekdays.
- Wellness
 - Provides faculty and staff with tools and skills for leading healthy lifestyles and preventing injury and illness.
- Health and Wellness Workshops
- Berkeley Postdoctoral Association (BPA)