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

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