

Change of residence in the eyes of a child

For a child to develop and use their potential, their basic needs must be met first. The most important of these is the need for security which is very much related to stability. It is referenced as the immutability of the environment, i.e. home, country, place of residence. However it is also the stability of people in the child's world, e.g. friends, the institution he/she attends, teachers, and friends. However the most important thing, especially for a preschooler or younger student, is the stability of his family. Even in the face of major changes a stable family situation will give the child a sense of security and thus allow him or her to adapt to the situation.

Change in a child's life

What can we do in the event of moving house? First of all it is worth to be aware of the tension that is present. Quite often parents talk to children about the positive sides of moving, about what will be "cool" and "how wonderful it will be". Experience shows, however, that in addition to this aspect children need help coping with loss. Every change brings both an aspect of profit and loss. In the conversation it is important to show the advantages of change but also to share reflections and ask, for example, what the child is going to miss. It is important to recognize his emotions, fears, and anxiety. You can also show him ways to deal with it (e.g. if a child misses his classmates, you

can visit them, contact them via Skype, etc.) while recognizing that this is something different than before. We can also share our feelings with the child. Of course, it is not about "flooding" the child with your anxiety but saying, "I wonder myself how is it going to be", "I am happy but I will miss our park" etc. Such a conversation can be received by the child as allowing it to feel different emotions in the face of change and thus results in better adaptation to it.





Youth and change of residence

The teenager will experience a change of residence quite differently. They have more experience behind them, so their view of the world is no longer as egocentric as that of a younger child. Therefore, they are able to accept and understand the perspective of other people's thinking. If they are informed in advance about plans to move, they will have time not only to feel their emotions but also to understand the reasons for parents' decision.

At the same time, it is through their previous experience, they have a pre-shaped identity, habits, relationships with peers and the entire cultural context. Therefore they will perceive the new environment differently than their younger siblings. They may be more critical of what they come across in their new place of residence. Sometimes to tame the fear of the unknown, they can devalue the new environment excessively.

Therefore, it is worth talking about their fears of the unknown and respect the need to preserve their current identity, e.g. by maintaining relationships with old friends, customs, and family rituals. Only then they might become open to what is new.

To enter the world of maturity with a sense of competence, a young person at the end of adolescence must answer the question "who am I?". Changing the place of residence does not have to hinder this, on the contrary - it can be helpful, giving new opportunities and possibilities. It is important for a young person to have someone to share his doubts and dilemmas with.

To sum up

As the saying goes, "you can't give someone something you don't own." So before we start supporting children as adults, we need to consider our condition and how we have experienced such a big change ourselves. Thanks to this we will be authentic and truly available as partners in dialogue.

Anna Zdolska-Wawrzekiewicz

Artur Lewandowski