

Additional techniques to help young people manage change include:

- giving them a calendar to count the days down to big events, such as moving school or moving house;
- explaining that it is OK to be nervous and ask questions;
- answering any questions about the change honestly;
- asking another adult to help you, e.g. if there are questions you cannot answer yourself;
- including the young person whenever possible in making decisions - if they feel their voice has been heard, they will find the change easier to manage. (Feeling empowered can help them take on responsibilities associated with the change and consequently help them make changes on their own as they get older).

Accept and acknowledge that young people can be upset when they are managing change. Acknowledge that it is OK to be upset. Give the young person time to be upset and talk to them about how they are feeling. Talk about a time when you became upset because of a change you experienced and share the positive way you managed to cope and deal with the difficult emotions. (It is very helpful for a young person to see that adults get upset and have to deal with things that are uncomfortable and cause anxiety.)

If you deal with change in a less positive way, that is OK. Explain that you could have dealt with it better and share how you might deal with something similar in the future. Making mistakes is a great way of learning and showing young people that nobody gets everything correct every time.

The effects of change can be short-lived or long-lasting.

Remember to be open, honest, consistent and positive about the changes that happen in a young person's life. Understand that change is challenging for both young people and adults. Demonstrate positive coping strategies and keep talking about the change for as long as this is necessary.

## How to Help a Young Person Deal with Change



Change is everywhere in life. Young people have to deal with it time and time again. They will move through some changes with very little acknowledgement and with little complaint. However, other changes may cause a young person some distress and worry.

There are ways that you can help steer a young person through the changes that happen in their life. You can help them to develop the skills they need and apply these to future changes.

Sometimes, the best way of supporting a young person is to positively model how to cope with changes yourself. A young person will observe how you cope and they will apply the same rules to their own life. It is important to remain calm and to treat any change as a challenge that can be dealt with and moved on from. Try and talk positively about changes and do not focus on the potential negatives.

Try and ensure that routines are maintained so that the boundaries and expectations remain the same for a young person, even if other things are changing. Routines help to create security and reassurance – change is much easier to deal with when everything else remains stable.

Adults appreciate the importance of stability – if we are changing jobs or moving to a new location, we crave the familiarity of routines, such as continuing to go to the gym on a Wednesday night, seeing friends

on a Saturday for lunch or visiting family on a Sunday. If we know we have the same things to look forward to, we feel much more resilient and in control. Young people are just the same.

It is important to maintain existing routines but if these get disrupted, it is possible to create new routines. For example, when a young person goes to a new school, some of their existing routines, such as walking home together, may have to change. New, positive routines can be introduced, such as making time to have a drink together after the school day to talk about the best parts of the day and deal with any issues, having a movie night at the weekend or having breakfast together. Involve the young person in decisions about any new routines so they are enthusiastic about the new event.

Adults deal with different changes all the time. As we get older, we are better equipped to deal with change because we have more experience of it. We understand that we might feel anxious or unsettled before a change happens but that these feelings will pass. We know our heightened emotions are usually temporary or short-lived. Providing constant reassurance will help the young person to deal with their difficult feelings.

Adults often research changes beforehand so that information is to hand and we can be prepared. Young people should also be encouraged to research their changes in

a way that is appropriate to their age and ability. For example, young children who are moving from infant school to junior school or from KS1 to KS2 may want to view the school website for pictures of what the older children do, or visit the new classroom and the new playground. Finding out about any new routines, e.g. for lunchtime, will help prepare them.

If you are moving to a new house and have children of different ages, a visual reminder of key events can be useful for everyone. Consider putting photographs of the old and the new house on the wall with all the key steps involved in the move in between. Use pictures of packing boxes and removal vans. If you are moving a long way, then use a map to show where you are moving to and how long it will take. Try to enable all the family to visit the new premises beforehand and take a photograph of the children and young people at the property to display – this reminder of where they are moving to can be reassuring.

Most people can cope positively with changes if they are given advance notice. Usually, any anxiety is caused by having decisions and changes imposed with little or no advance warning. Sometimes, changes are spontaneous and do need an immediate response – a young person can only deal with this as best they can. They may respond well at the time but keep a watchful eye on any changes in their behaviour over the following weeks which could be a delayed reaction to the change.