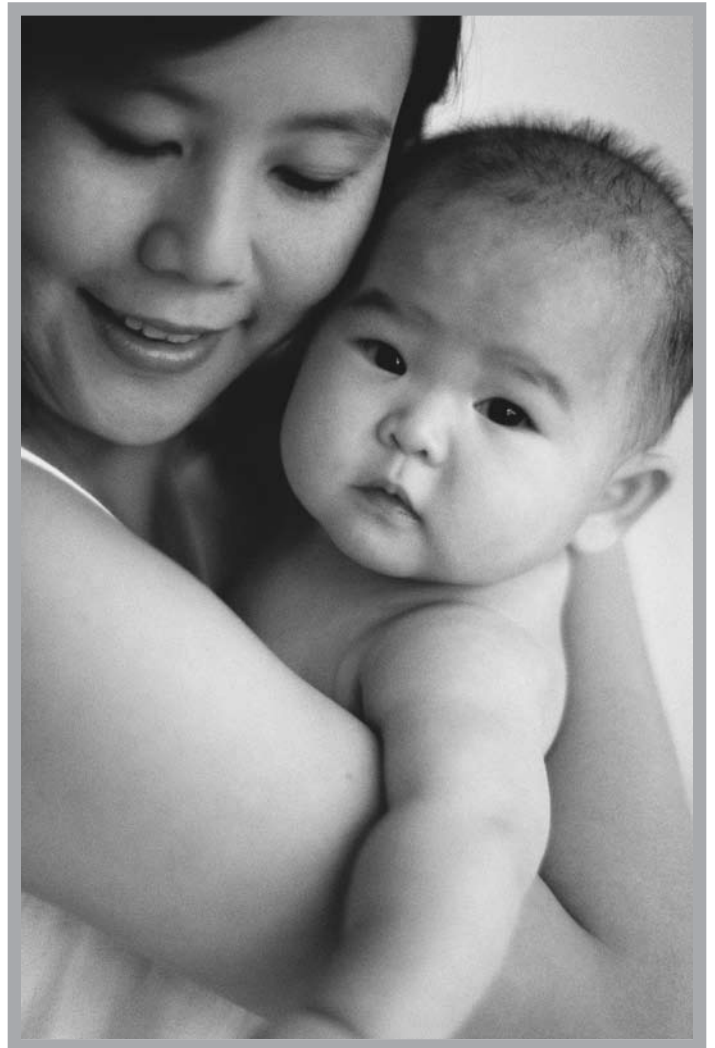


**“I Like My Old Home.
Where Are We Going and Why?”**

Helping Your Child Deal With Relocation

Change, good or bad, can be difficult. Fortunately, most adults have learned through their experiences and relationships ways to cope with change. Young children, on the other hand, are just beginning to learn these new skills. As babies and toddlers slowly figure out how to deal with change, they look to their caregivers for guidance and support. Babies and toddlers experience countless changes in the early years, from learning to walk or crawl to the birth of a new sibling. For children with military parents, these changes often go hand in hand with military-specific changes, such as relocation. When caregivers are mindful of how moving can affect babies and toddlers, they have a much better chance of helping their young children through this experience.

Relocation can be an exciting, but stressful event. The move, including the pack-out, the trip, and the unpacking, can be exhausting. Families often leave family and friends behind as they seek out a new place to live, new friends, new medical care, new child care, and other basics. Parents often feel drained and have less energy to devote to their young children. Babies and toddlers pick up on their parents' stress and may act out as a result, leaving parents even more drained! How do we break that cycle?



Parents can support themselves by supporting their young children and understanding their needs, experiences, and perceptions. Babies and toddlers, just like their parents, experience loss during a

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move. Young children can miss their old home, their friends, their caregivers, their playgrounds, and so many other things. For babies and toddlers, these familiar places and people represent comfort and security. It might be all they have ever known.

Parents can help their children through a move simply by being sensitive to how babies and toddlers may be affected. Parents can explain the move, before the packing begins, using simple, reassuring language that leaves the door open for questions and the opportunity for follow-up talk. As part of these conversations, parents can describe the pack-out, the trip, and what to expect at their new location. Parents can talk about what will be the same and what will be different. Older toddlers can help “pack” and “unpack” by handing objects to their parents or having their own boxes (filled with safe, nonbreakables of course) to fill

or unload. Helping out Mommy or Daddy can feel empowering for young children who, at the time of a move, may feel like things are out of their control. It is very important that special objects, such as favorite “lovies,” be placed in a bag or box that will stay with the family throughout the move. That way, young children are surrounded by those treasured items that make them feel most secure.

ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit whose mission is to support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and their families. For more information on ways to support you and your young children, visit our Web site at: www.zerotothree.org/military

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