

When you move, it seems as if your life is starting over. When you think about this, you realize that it is, in a sense. Most of the factors that make up your life - friends, family, surroundings, and activities - are changed.

Having a new house alone is like a new beginning. When you move your stuff in, your room may not seem like your own room at first. Your walls look different, your bed isn't where it was before, and you have a new view out your window. When you step out of your door, the hall is not the familiar passageway you are used to - maybe it's not even a hall! Your room is a different size than your old one, and in a different location relative to bathrooms, other bedrooms, the kitchen, and the front door. You must form new habits and a new pattern to fit your new surroundings.

In addition, your activities may change. If you took Irish step dancing, but there's no one who teaches that where you live now, too bad. However, an excellent neighborhood pool may get you interested in swimming, just as a tennis court down the road might spark an interest in tennis.

If that isn't enough, you've usually left all your friends back at home. You may write to them, send pictures, and talk on the phone, but it's never the same. You must develop new friendships. Some may be better than your old ones, and some may be worse. But you can't change the past, and your old friends aren't right next door or down the block anymore. You'll have to deal with your new ones.

You may think that's all, but it isn't. Your world is spun upside-down when trying to navigate the new neighborhood or drive to your new church. More likely than not, you'll get lost a couple of times just trying to adapt to the new streets. You meet a dead end when you thought you'd see a Wal-Mart, and you must screech on the brakes when you see a stop sign you didn't expect to be there. The "Corner Store" is no longer around

the corner, and you must drive far to get there or do without.

When you feel you can't take it anymore, you find out that there are more life-changing surprises just around the corner - or maybe right next door! Yes, a new house means new neighbors. You can't go next door and babysit your neighbor's cats anymore, because your neighbor doesn't have any cats. The grouchy man down the street may have a dog that howls through the night, and the kids next door may be brats.

Nevertheless, changes don't always have to be for the worse. You may be very happy with your new room, and you may have new friends who prove to be more loyal and trustworthy than your old ones. You may find a better Irish step dancing school down the road, or discover you like tennis more than dance. Your trips to the store may be shorter because the roads in your new town are more efficient, and your neighbors may be wonderful, nice, and considerate. But whether the changes are for good or for bad, you will always be forced to cast aside everything you know as familiar and begin a new life.