

Life Changes....

Doesn't it seem like before you had children, you could handle the changes that came in your life a little easier? Well, that's because you didn't have those little eyes looking to you for reassurance during those times. Children can sense that a change is on the horizon (like a new baby coming) even before you tell them. You may not realize how much you change in the face of a new event or transition in life, but they do. They sense your cues (verbal and nonverbal) fast! If you think your child doesn't know a new baby is on the way, think again! The best way to handle it: talk to them. Tell them what's going on ("we're moving and you're going to meet lots of new friends!"). Let them have a going away play-date/get-together, have them make cards for their friends to give to them the week before they leave. If you're pregnant you have many months to tell them about what a special role it is to be a big sister, and help them make crafts for their new baby brother and involve them as much as possible in the room decorating, shopping, etc. With a transition such as moving to a new city or a parent moving out, wait till a couple months before it happens so they don't dwell on it for too long (unless they start asking questions because they've noticed things changing), but give them enough time to have closure. There are many books out there based on stories where kids are moving to a new school, a new town, or becoming a big sister. Use these characters in the books to tell them who they can be brave like. If the transition you are going through is a separation or divorce, there are many different ways to handle this, which depend on the age of the child. During this time your emotions are running high and your patience is most likely running low with your children. Take the time to center yourself before picking up your kids or dealing with a tantrum. If they sense your stress, it will cause them to become stressed at the uncertainty of wondering if everything is going to be okay. Remind yourself that it is, so you can portray to them that it will be. Keep your heated discussions to private rooms and be prepared for the children to act out in age-appropriate ways, such as your toddler biting or your pre-schooler wetting the bed or his pants. This is their way of letting you know that they feel the stress and are anxious too, which is their way of asking for reassurance from you. If these behaviors last for an extended time-frame, call a therapist to seek family or play therapy.

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