

Whether you like change or not, you will face many changes throughout your lifetime. How you *cope* with them often has a bit to do with your personality, a bit with how you were *raised*, and a whole lot on what *type* of change you are experiencing.

When something stressful happens to a family, a change, whether it's a new child, a move, a job change, broken relationship, or death in the family, there are things you can do to help your kids cope. Talk with your child about it at an age appropriate level. Talk about their concerns and listen to what they have to say. Comfort them with the things that haven't changed, like your love for them or that their family is still a family.¹ There are things you can do to keep you and your family stable during these unsettling times.^{2,4,5}

Focus on the Positives

How change affects you and how you can manage your own emotions, fears, and reactions during unsettling times is very important. Your reactions should *teach* your child good coping skills. How you react will shape their future behavior. It is healthy to acknowledge loss but try to focus on the good things too. This will help you feel better, and it will help your family.

Get to the Root of Your Fears

Identifying your fears, and then coming up with a plan to help reduce them, makes the upcoming change less scary and more manageable.

Set Good Boundaries

Wisely guard the *time* you need to give to your family to help them cope and adjust. Remember, people don't always respect boundaries and sometimes try to make you feel guilty for them. So be clear on the time you and your family need and **PROTECT THOSE BOUNDARIES**.

Take Care of Yourself

During this time, take *good care* of yourself. Stick to your own routines. Make sure you're getting plenty of sleep, eating well, staying hydrated, and getting plenty of exercise. Make sure you're doing things that build you up and encourage you like maintaining friendships. Talk about your own fears.¹

Maintain Routines

Continue family routines and traditions. Ensuring that your day-to-day routines are the same, even though there is a change, comforts your children and it will help them adapt.¹

When we manage change *positively*, we show our children that change is a *normal*, regular part of life. It may shift our direction a bit, but in the end, we simply *adjust* and move forward.

Resources include:

1. Williams, Glenda, MD, Pediatrician, January 2019
2. Thompson, Suzanne C. "Finding Positive Meaning in a Stressful Event and Coping." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1985, pp. 279–295., doi:10.1207/s15324834basp0604_1.
3. Millman, Dan. *Way of the Peaceful Warrior: A Book That Changes Lives*. 20th ed., Read How You Want, 2000.
4. Seligman, Martin E. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. Random House Publishing, 2006.
5. Lerner, C. "Managing Your Own Emotions: The Key to Positive, Effective Parenting." ZERO TO THREE, Zero to Three, 29 Feb. 2016, www.zerotothree.org/resources/338-managing-your-own-emotions-the-key-to-positive-effective-parenting. accessed 1/8/2019.
6. Terry Clark-Jones, Michigan State University Extension. "Qualities of a Healthy Family." MSU Extension, Michigan State University, 9 Mar. 2021, msue.anr.msu.edu/news/traits_of_a_healthy_family. accessed 1/8/2019.