

## Parent/Leader Discussion Guide

### *We Serve Too!™—Little Daisy's Worst/Best Day*

By Kathleen Edick and Paula J Johnson

Guide for parents and leaders to help children adjust to a move.

This book tells the story, a true story, of a difficult move (even though it was a dog moving), and the adjustments Little Daisy eventually makes to her new life.

*"Oh, honey, come here now and sit by my side."  
"We'll be sad together," she sniffled and cried.*

In the first page of the story we see the kids hugging grandma and sharing the sad news that they will be moving. The grandmother shares the sadness and allows the tears. Sharing in sadness is a good thing as we bring comfort to one another. Trying to stop the tears, by saying "be a big boy, or girl" or not allowing others to grieve the loss, can create long lasting grief rather than the ability to process and move forward. Just be sure you are sharing "good grief", not despair, anger, or "tantrums" (*yes, adults can do that, too*). A child needs the security of knowing you are still in control, though you are sad, too.

Be real with what you feel. If you are happy and excited about the move, you can genuinely express that, too, but realize your children may not be in the same place at the same time as you are. It is a chance for everyone to learn empathy for one another.

If there are significant people they will be leaving, be sure to give those people opportunity to share in the "moving" emotions. The exception might be if someone is trying to convince your child that the move is not a good one. It is ok to protect the child, in that case, by talking to those adults and convincing them not to share a negative view with the child since children should be shielded from problems out of their control. Remember—not all protection is over-protection.

*...who was one of nine pups in a cute house of blue  
with a white picket fence where she ran and she grew.  
In a house full of kids whom she did adore,  
She loved eating spaghetti they dropped on the floor!...*

These next pages find the puppy very happy with her current life, telling about things she enjoys right where she is. Talking about things your family loves where you live now will help lock those good things into their memories. This is good to do even before they have received the news of the upcoming move which will precipitate the follow-up questions: What will they miss? Are these things they miss going to be things that they can do after the move or will they need to let go of that? Who will they miss the most? Naming things gives solid meaning to things they may be missing if they are having a hard time with a move.

Consider doing some special farewell activities: last visits to a few favorite places, perhaps with a favorite friend to exchange phone numbers or addresses to keep in touch. (Even if they do not really stay in touch, just knowing they can will be a comfort.)

*But then came a day and the kids were all crying.  
Two people came in and there was no denying;  
They came with a leash and they put on her collar  
And they led her outside in the rain and the squalor.*

Then comes the sad day of moving. In the story, people come to take Little Daisy to her new home. This dark sad day part of the story gives an opening for those feelings to be expressed. What is your child afraid of with the new move? Is there something scary that they are imagining? You can ask what your child feels about this scary rainy day picture.

You will have a chance to let them know you will be there to help them and to acknowledge that new things *can* be scary...but keep reading, things get better!

*(This is a true story. In real life Daisy was living in a home full of foster children. Circumstances outside of the family's control necessitated saying "goodbye" to Daisy. So Paula and Barry adopted her and brought her to their farm.)*

*Then into the back of a pick-up they put her.  
Where were they taking that sweet ball of gold fur?  
Miles and miles down a long country road  
To a big country farm house—her new abode?*

Fear of the unknown can be paralyzing. Gently explore what expectations (both positive and negative) your child may have about their new home. (You may need to explain that "abode" is another word for a home.) What do they think their new home will look like? What might the neighbors be like? The weather? You get the idea.

Get them on board with plans for the new home. If possible let them choose colors for a new room. A deliberate boxing up of favorite toys and clothes into a specially marked box that just belongs to them will help them feel confident familiar things will be going along.

Make a game of it. Have them draw a picture of what they imagine the new home will be like, then take it along and see how close they came!

How will you travel? Let them know if it is a long car ride, a train or plane.

Will you be moving to another state? Find fun things that the new state offers and talk about them.

Going to another country? Find books and videos that tell about the country. Maybe you can make some food or listen to some music that comes from that country.

Your sense of adventure will be contagious.

*Oh! This was the WORST DAY she ever had.  
They took her from people she loved. She was sad!  
... Day after day, Daisy rejected  
The love her new family gave and expected.*

Daisy decides she **will not** like this new home. If your child makes that decision let them have some time to grieve. Then you can use this book to help them get "unstuck" and moving forward. The decision that Daisy makes later, to let go and love what she has, will help your child focus on the good things, too, to find comfort and joy in this new life.

*"So...You like spaghetti? Well... just for tonight  
You can eat all you want. See, you'll be alright.  
Yum! That spaghetti was surely delicious;  
And she actually ate it from one of their dishes!*

Daisy comes alive with spaghetti, something she enjoyed in her first home. Then, it became a catalyst for comfort in her new home.

You might want to make your child's favorite comfort food a few days after the move. Tastes and smells are powerful reminders.

Make a point of unpacking the "special things" box together to reassure them that not everything is different; some things stay the same. Your love for each other doesn't change and being a part of a family doesn't change, either.

If you have a faith family to get connected with, that will be another thread of consistency no matter where you go.

Still, there will be days when longing for the old can overwhelm a child. Be patient. When children say they miss friends, their school, and make comments like: "my old school let us have chocolate milk and this stupid school only has white milk", understand, the milk is not the issue. It is a place where they are working out the grief and change. Just listen and say something that does not give too much importance to it." I'm sorry that you are disappointed in the new school, but you said you love your new art teacher, right?" Follow the negative with something positive. Let children know the feelings will come and go for a while.

*But she still missed the kids and the cute house of blue  
With the white picket fence where she ran and she grew.  
Spaghetti is nice but that very Worst Day  
Still hurt in her heart in the very worst way.  
Then one day the farmer said, "Hop up here, girl!"  
And somehow without thinking it made her tail curl.  
Then immediately into the pickup she hopped;  
She found a new love! Now she could not be stopped!*

Little Daisy discovers that farm life has many good things to enjoy. Talk to your child about all the good things you have found in your new home. Speak about it naturally, "I love our new fireplace, our other home did not have one, let's make a cozy fire!" "I love the park down the street; it is so close we can go any day we want!"

Make sure that you are finding ways to make your own adjustments well. You can help your child by getting settled into routines—choosing a grocery store, connecting to a new church, joining other families in the neighborhood for a meal, encouraging your children to invite new friends to the house, etc.

Daisy finds many things to enjoy in her new home (*she really did have crowdads hanging off her ears like earrings!*) Ask your child which of these things they think Daisy liked best. "What things do you like best in your new home and neighborhood?" "When/where do you feel most like you belong in this new place?"

*...Now her memories were happy for she loved her new life  
Of spaghetti... and pickups... and ditches... and mice!*

Are they beginning to fondly remember things about the old places? Then they are starting to heal. Reinforce the growth you see in them as they have persevered through the difficult times to grow stronger. Learning to love what they have while moving forward is a life skill they will always use.

*(It is an interesting phenomenon that some of the most unpleasant experiences become some of the most enjoyed memories when told (the horrible meal, the correction at school, etc.). Learning to laugh and see the humor in life is a great gift to give your children. It can be fun to spend some time remembering the awful things, too, just to put **today's** awful things into perspective.)*

*No longer is that sad day named Daisy's Worst Day,  
For bad things can be good things in a strange sort of way.  
Today if you'd ask her about it she'd say,  
"It turned out to be my very Worst/BEST Day!"*

Ask your child what they think that it means to have a worst/best day? Can they tell you about a day they might call a worst/best day? Can you share a day like that in your life, something that was hard, but something you would not trade because of the lessons learned? Kids love to know that you also have gone through hard times and come through them. It gives them courage to do the same.

*Now...We can be sad and wait for the glad  
If we look for the good, it is there to be had.*

Help your kids look for the good—looking for the positive things to be thankful for. People who learn this lesson are happier over all.

*You'll remember and miss us, and we'll miss you, too,  
But we won't grow apart, there are things we can do  
To keep our connections and share our new lives  
Until every vacation time finally arrives.*

Help kids stay connected to family and friends they had to leave behind. Letters, Skype, gifts, etc., let those relationships thrive despite being miles apart. Some ideas for long distance relationship building can be found in our other books. (You might want to adapt the Homecoming Box for keeping "moving memories" of friends and places.) However, be sure to emphasize the value of being fully present in your new home, making new friends, etc. There are only so many relationships time will allow. Look for balance, here.

*Now...We can be sad and wait for the glad  
If we look for the good, it is there to be had.  
So move on with patience and give yourselves grace  
'Till your new house is your home and not just a place.*

Carrying the attitude of adventure and joyful anticipation is something your children will learn from you. As you merge grief and gratitude, adventure and acceptance, so will you be balancing the *keeping* of memories with the *making* of new memories. Remember to be patient and give yourselves grace. Moving can be traumatic and it will have its ups and downs. Don't panic. Give time some time to work.

*So we'll think of dear Daisy, we'll trust and we'll pray  
That today's goodbye "worst day" is just our own Worst/BEST Day!*

The **We Serve Too!**<sup>TM</sup> dog tag says " I will be strong and courageous". This might be a good thing for the kids to wear as you relocate and prepare to enjoy this new life full of more Worst/Best Days!

We hope that your move will be a great adventure, that you will find new and wonderful, lifelong friends.

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