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How to survive—and thrive—when you're making an unplanned move



In an ideal world, every move would be a move on up—to a bigger apartment, a better neighborhood, to an overall better living situation. But in reality, some moves aren't planned or preferred. In the spirit of starting over in the new year, we asked experts for advice on how to transition to a new space even when you'd rather not (whether you're splitting up from someone, have had a career setback and can't afford to stay put in your old hom, or any other less-than-ideal reason to move).

Try to differentiate between the home and your disappointment

Remember that your new home isn't the reason you're upset or your life has taken a temporary setback; on the contrary it's bailing you out when you need it, says Gail Sinai, a licensed clinical social worker. "Even if it's not a perfect match, remember that it's not a punishment," she says.

"One of the things I'd want someone to do is get back to the brass tacks of the sorrow, and not invest the new place with the cause of disappointment," Sinai advises. "You need to grieve and process your loss, but you also need to separate it from your new home."

Remember that this is temporary

"It's important to keep things in perspective, says Sinai. "Nothing will last forever—either good or bad," says Sinai.

"A lot of times it feels like this new place will represent the lifestyle you'll have for the rest of your life, but it's important to remember this is a for a year or two," says Lynn Saladino, a clinical psychologist who acts as a health and wellness consultant for Mirador Real Estate. "Put a time limit on how long it's going to be, and realize you can revisit it next year."

Figure out your priorities

"Consider the location very carefully," says Saladino. "If you're breaking up with someone, you may want to prioritize being near friends and not getting a huge apartment." If you're moving away from an ex, make sure you have the distance you need and want.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

It's all part of the "treat yo' self" mentality, but Saladino suggest you consider hiring movers to pack or unpack your stuff, so that's one more thing you don't have to worry about. Plus, if you know the act of packing and unpacking is going to be very trying for you, it might help to save yourself the grief.

Make the new place as inviting as possible

"Sometimes when we resist change, we resist settling into the new place," says Saladino. She recommends trying to make it a comfortable space even if it's not the same as you had before. "Find simple ways to make it more comfortable for yourself," she reminds. For some people who are going through a break-up, a new apartment offers the first opportunity in a long time to decorate just as they please (without taking into account a partner or spouse). Use that as an excuse to buy things you really love, says Saladino.

For a more symbolic way to hit the reset button, Lisa Graham, a broker with Core, who is also a holistic health coach, offers clients looking for new starts an opportunity to "smudge" in their new apartment. For those who are open to it, she takes a bit of smoking sage and goes from room to room and corner to corner in a process that's supposed to get rid of any lingering negative spirits. "The idea is that sage smoke attaches itself to the negative or stuck energy and takes that energy with it," she explains. (Smudging can also be done in both and old and new space, she says.)

Graham says it's also helpful to stage and set intentions for a new home. "It's about deciding, and naming, what you want to do with that new space. You want to bring in positivity and release anything negative. Both of these things help people feel more rooted in the apartment."

Graham also work with essential oils to cleanse a space. "Aromatically diffusing them into your home, can shift the energy," she says. "It also helps to cleanse the air from pathogens, bacteria and viruses."

Every different kind of oil "has an emotional component, and also a scientific component in terms of how it works on a cellular level with the body," explains Graham. "Even if you're not moving, it's something I always do in the new year to start fresh."