

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Making the Decision to Relocate

The opportunity to relocate brings with it a flurry of emotions. Excitement at the possibilities and the adventure that could lie ahead, the chance to meet new friends, explore a new region or culture and perhaps even live in a new climate. However, you are also faced with a whole slew of important questions.

Will you be better or worse off financially? How will your partner and your children adjust? How will you adjust to living and working in a brand new culture? Will it be a positive or a negative experience? Let's look at some of the issues that need to be considered, along with strategies that can help you make the right decision for you and your family.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Both practical and emotional factors must be considered when approaching a decision about relocating. Some people simply aren't cut out for major lifestyle changes. Other practical factors like special needs children or extended family responsibilities may also impact your decision. Here are some tips to consider:

Self-Assessment

Reflection is a valuable first step. There are also services available such as career coaching or online assessments that can help with the decision process. First examine your skills and personality attributes, both work-related and general. Make a list, and include volunteer work, past accomplishments and personal and professional strengths in your assessment of your interests and talents.

Personal achievements can point to areas in which you enjoy success. Ask previous teachers, employers or colleagues for their assessments of your strengths.

A Question of Personality

Some people simply aren't made for relocation and this could include yourself or your partner. Reflect on your preferences and those of your partner with such considerations as:

- Are you adventurers? Do you relish the unknown and bore easily with the familiar?
- When you travel, do you prefer new places or re-visiting well loved, "tried and true" destinations?
- How flexible are you? Does it bother you when routine is upturned? Does change excite you or unnerve you?
- How independent are you? Do you enjoy taking the initiative? Would you enjoy researching a whole new life? How equipped would you be to dive in?
- Have you successfully made major transitions before?
- How close are you to extended family members? Will you be happy living far from them? Do you depend on them a great deal now?
- How dependent are you on friends? Do you find it easy to make new friends?

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Even if your whole family is ready, willing and able to take on the challenges of relocation, many practical considerations should also play into your decision, including:

- Research your new city. Consider safety, education, transportation, cultural and entertainment options, community services and health facilities.
- If your partner works outside the home, what are the career opportunities in the new location? How old are your children? Are they at a good stage to adjust?
- Do you have responsibilities to extended family members with health concerns? How easy would it be to return and care for them?
- Do you or your partner have children from previous relationships, who would remain in your current city? How often would you be able to see them?
- Consider all the expenses a move could incur. Go beyond the obvious and think about personal and property taxes, rent, cost-of-living, property sale and purchase fees, weather related changes such as warmer clothes or heating bills, your partner's earning potential, phone calls and trips home, need for an extra car, etc. Will the salary of your new job cover your new expenses?
- Will you get the opportunity to scout the new location before deciding? Try to visit for as long as you can and talk to people who live there.

Making a decision that uproots your entire family from the way of life they know can be a challenge. A lot of personal reflection, research and communication will be needed, but will result in the decision that best serves the needs of the family.