

Transform your move from from "Ughh!" to "Ahhh!" with these tips from Stress Expert Susan Meredith.

Mother Nature's Advice for Moving

By SUSAN MEREDITH

Ever wonder why moving is considered one of the most stressful situations in our lives? If you want to know why, ask Mother Nature.

I have moved more times than I have fingers and toes. That includes three states and two continents. Only once did I use a moving company, and that was the first relocation ever. I figure I can call myself an expert. That doesn't mean I'm good at it, just very experienced. I've had plenty of opportunity to ask Mother Nature about the stresses of moving.

Why Mother Nature, you ask? Wouldn't it be arrogant to assume that everything else in the world adhered to Mother Nature's Laws except us? The laws of nature that apply to the physical world also apply to us people. So... let's look at what the laws of stress in nature tell us about stress in human nature.

Stress is not a bad thing. Strain is. You can tell you have too much stress when you have strain. In the physical world, that means something deforms. We observe how something deforms, and determine what kind of stress is occurring. In the same way, we can look at how our behaviors get "deformed" when we get cranky, irritable, or depressed. The type of deformation we experience can then tell us the type of stress that's causing it. Then we can determine how to deal with it.

There are three kinds of stress that relate to stresses in inanimate objects. They correlate to stresses we deal with; those caused by external demands, stresses from our surroundings, and those caused by what I call "metaphysical misalignments." For the technical folks, these relates to Tensile Stress, Volume Stress, and Shear Stress.

If you're feeling confusion, indecision, or overwhelm, it's probably due to those conflicting external demands on your time and energy. When you move, everything needs doing at once. You feel stretched, or bombarded by the tasks, like a rubberband pulled from two directions. Or maybe twelve directions.

You can't do everything at once, so don't try. Make a list and map out priorities. Then follow through your list one by one. Or if everything seems to have the same urgency, pick one thing, and forget about the rest. Can't decide? Sit still for a minute till one task calls to you. Trust your instincts and you'll fly through the tasks.

If you have a vague, overall sense of irritability and angst, it's probably due to environmental stress, or the stress from your surroundings. You walk into a room, and go "Yuk!" Your olive colored comforter just doesn't look right with the hot pink paint in the bedroom. Books are piled in a corner, boxes scattered, the walls look bare... But the truth is, there



isn't any one thing that will soothe your feelings of discomfort because it's the unfamiliarity of it all that's bugging you.

You can either get away from the environment, or change it. If you need temporary relief, take a walk, or go out for pizza. Then get back there and get one room in tiptop shape replete with your favorite items. You will have a place to retreat to, where you feel calm and nurtured. You can venture into that room of horrors when you feel refreshed and ready to tackle it.

Another aspect of environmental stress is fear of the unknown. Where are the grocery stores, dry cleaners, video stores? Education is a terrific antidote to unknown-ness. Educate yourself on what's in the neighborhood. Get out and

drive around. You can make that much needed pizza break a productive venture.

If you feel OK with your environment, until you think of having friends over, then you're dealing with the metaphysical misalignment stress. It is often indicated by the frequent use of the words "should" and "ought." The deformations are exhibited by prolonged feelings of anger, resentment, shame, guilt, and sadness. The misalignment occurs when there is a difference between reality and what you think should be, when you're stuck in thoughts or feelings, and it stops you in life.

If the thought of your friends seeing that olive and pink combo in the bedroom makes you cringe, it's only because you

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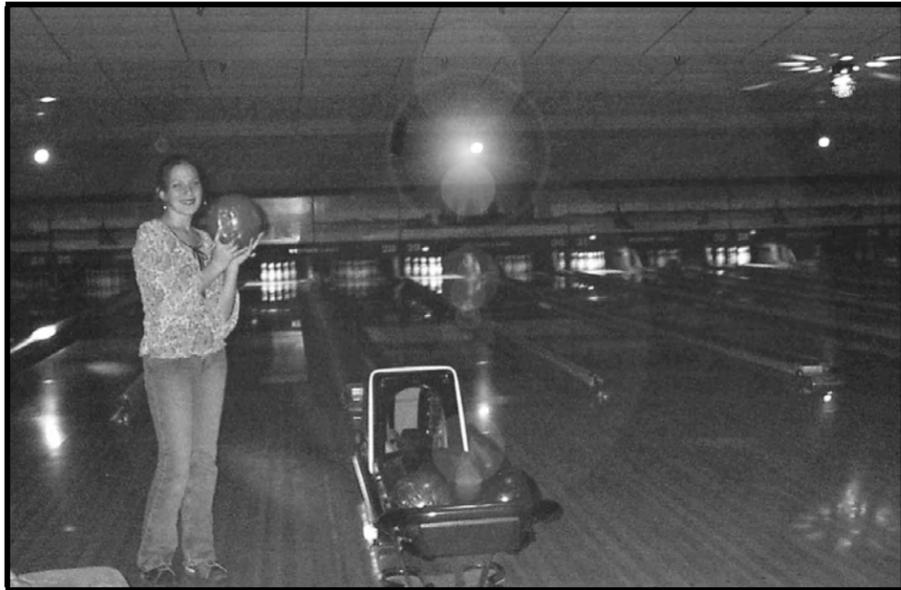
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Disco balls, strobe lights, fog machines, and dance music - this definitely isn't the kind of bowling your parents grew up with.

Bowling in the dark - an extreme improvement

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What do you get when you cross ordinary bowling with a rave party? How about EXTREME bowling?

I didn't think anything could be too hip when you're wearing shoes as ugly as those things you get in a bowling alley, but I admit Westgate Lanes does a pretty good job of making it work on Friday and Saturday nights. And besides, you're going to need them if you're going to dance on slick surfaces.

Disco balls, strobe lights, fog machines and dance music add a whole new dimension to knocking down the pins. Its not only a lot more fun, but it was harder for other people to notice all the gutter balls I threw with the lights out. A definite plus.

Everybody looked like they were having more fun than the usual bowling alley scene I'm used to - something out of "Kingpin" with a lot of really good bowlers taking it all seriously. On the night I was there, a lot of people were dancing and bowling at the same time, especially when they would walk up to

the machine to get their ball. I don't know if the same people show up every week, but I know when I went the crowd was as entertaining as the atmosphere.

Westgate Lanes calls it "Electric Bowling" and it starts at about 10:30 every Friday and Saturday night. The guys at the counter said that sometimes they wait to start it if there are a lot of older people in the room because "the older crowd doesn't like it much." So we went at 11:00 just to make sure.

By the way, there was a police officer walking around the whole time so your parents can relax if they're worried about it getting out of hand. Not likely. They can also try it themselves - there were (a few) parents in there.

Westgate Lanes is located at 2701 W. William Cannon, at the corner of William Cannon and Westgate. (441-2695) The cost for electric bowling is the same as regular bowling (\$3.40/game). There may be other bowling alleys in town that do something similar, so I'd suggest calling around if you're looking for someplace closer to you. Have fun!

Advice for Moving

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think you should have everything looking beautiful. Or maybe you're afraid they'll think you bought a yukky house. So what!

If you really want to get over it, have a big party on moving day. Everyone will see your house at it's worst, and you can invite them over later, knowing that they'll see a huge improvement! But if you don't have any visitors for the first year because you think you should have painted that pink by now, you're back in stuckness, and it's time to get clear.

You might also be stuck in a misalignment over what someone else did or didn't do. In the last house we bought, the electrical outlets must have been installed by a monkey. Half of them didn't work. The electrician should have done a better job. The previous owners should have told us. Etc, etc. It's not going to do any good to complain, so either fix it or forget about it. Get on with falling in love with your house.

Another cause of metaphysical misalignments can be a conflict between your head and your heart. You think you should be happy, but you're not, so you keep those emotions stuck. Allow yourself some time to grieve. Even if you're in the same town, you have left a dear friend - that previous home. Not to mention the neighbors; assuming you liked them. If you grieve too long, that indicates more stuckness though. Get over it. Try the mantra "There is nothing wrong."

Your stress is a combination of the stresses from all of the pressures in your life. Assess your overall situation, and see where you can back off from pressures, where you need to step up, and where there is a possibility to break through.

While you're in the throes of moving, back away from pressures from other areas of your life and deal with them later. You probably have to step up to the tasks of moving, and you'll feel better for having them done. And the good news is, our capacity for handling stress can

increase. Next time a move, or other major project, will be easier.

Breaking through relates to an aspect of stress in biological organisms, which is that transformational growth can occur through stress. Think caterpillars to butterflies, and birthing babies. Moving is definitely a transformational experience.

If you get emotional, don't be surprised. It's a necessary relief outlet for dealing with the transformation. Don't think you "should" be able to handle it. You might try laughing instead of crying though. Both achieve the same objective.

Other important elements are to allow for cycling, the ebb and flow; work like crazy, then slow up, then pick up the pace again, allowing the shifts to vary naturally. And get a good support structure. Friends are always a plus. Meet the new neighbors, and decide to like them.

Turn the move into a challenging game, seeing how quickly you can get everything done, with a huge celebration at the end. On one move when I had friends help me, one wouldn't let me stop until every box was unpacked. At the time I moaned and complained. Afterwards, I was really grateful! Just think how much less stressful it would have been if I had had fun with the whole thing?! But if I had done that, I wouldn't be the expert I am on stress...

Susan Meredith is co-owner of a training company called Human Excellence. Susan writes and speaks about "Mother Nature's Laws", and relates how the laws of nature apply to human nature. She has recently completed her first book, on the topic of "Mother Nature's Laws of Stress in a Changing World."

Human Excellence is offering a Stress and Change Management Retreat on October 17th and 18th. If you need a break, and/or want to learn more, give them a call at 326-9300 or visit www.humanexcel.com.

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