



## MOVING TO A NEW PLACE BRINGS STRESSES AND POSSIBILITIES

BY TONISHA MELVIN

A change of address is never just about geography. It's about identity, routines, and the quiet (or loud) emotional shifts that happen when familiar walls disappear. I know this intimately. More than five years ago, my family and I moved during the pandemic from a nearly 3,000-square-foot home in Georgia to the Washington, D.C., area in the thick of the coronavirus pandemic, and then once again in 2025, this time after I became an empty nester. Each move carried its own promise and its own psychological weight of the unknown.

The first move, out of Georgia during the pandemic, was planned but felt abrupt and a bit disorienting. Leaving our home, filled with years of memories, ample space, and a sense of stability, felt like stepping into a question mark. At the time, the world itself was unstable, and moving only amplified that feeling. There was grief in downsizing, anxiety in uncertainty, and a subtle loss of self that came with leaving a place where life once felt anchored.

Relocating during the pandemic added another layer. Social distancing left us with limited ways to connect. Isolation has a way of sneaking up on you in a new place, especially when community-building opportunities are restricted. For mental health, this period taught me that loneliness isn't always about being alone; it's about feeling unmoored. I learned the importance of creating microanchors through daily walks or family activities, familiar coffee orders at my favorite coffee shop, and small rituals that whispered, *"You belong somewhere, even here."*

Then came 2025 and another move, this one following empty nesting. Although this move was also intentional, it was less about survival, more about alignment. With children grown and life quieter, the focus shifted inward. Who am I now? What do I need from a space to support my mental health? This move wasn't just about a new address; it was about choosing peace, simplicity, and emotional sustainability.

Moving, especially repeatedly, can challenge anyone's mental health. It can stir grief, anxiety, and identity confusion. But it can also open doors to healing and the reinvention of oneself. The key is how we care for ourselves through the transition. A few strategies made a meaningful difference for me:

**FIRST, ACKNOWLEDGE THE LOSS.** Even positive moves come with grief. Naming it reduces its power and returns that power to you.

**ESTABLISH ROUTINES QUICKLY.** Familiar habits ground the nervous system when everything else feels new.

**PERSONALIZE YOUR SPACE EARLY.** Mental health thrives in environments that feel safe and reflective of who you are now, not who you were.

### SEEK CONNECTION INTENTIONALLY.

Community doesn't always happen organically; sometimes it's built one conversation, class, or shared interest at a time.

**PERMIT YOURSELF TO EVOLVE.** Moving often mirrors internal change. Resisting that can increase distress, but embracing it can be freeing.

A change of address doesn't just relocate your body; it challenges your mind and, for some, their spirit. But within that disruption lie possibilities: the chance to redefine where you call home, to prioritize mental health, and to choose a life that fits the person you're becoming. Sometimes, moving isn't about leaving something behind. It's about finally arriving.



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