

All of the refreshing possibilities inherent in the exciting concept of new beginnings apply to the realities of relocating to a different community.

Relocation is rarely a seamless and easy adjustment to make; frequently it isn't initiated by choice. Job losses or reassignments, health status changes, widowhood, divorce and other life-altering events may prod us into making major lifestyle revisions that we might prefer not to have to make at all.

The attitude that we choose to maintain over the course of our transition will make a very big difference in the success or failure of our adjustment.

If we allow ourselves to wallow for very long in loneliness, resentment, grief or depression, we will delay creating a fulfilling life at our new location.

The first step towards your new future might need to be a determination to cope effectively. Then, clarify a specific direction for your coping activities.

The kinds of activities that we previously enjoyed might not be readily available in a new location but we can make a positive and affirmative decision to investigate whatever is available and to make choices from among those possibilities, even if they are not initially very appealing.

Work becomes especially important at times like this; whether it be paid employment, volunteer community work, online activities, coursework, athletic participation, whatever it is, find a way to use your extra time.

We feel best and we are emotionally healthiest when we are performing tasks that are stimulating and productive, even though we might view ourselves primarily as stay-at-home parents, as disabled or even as retired.

I recall vividly the intense culture shock of moving from my beautiful home in the leafy, hilly suburbs of metropolitan Boston to a huge, barren, fortress-like Midwestern university when my husband started graduate school there.

We moved into a run down, barracks-style apartment in the student housing section of a community that I had never before even visited. The terrain everywhere was flat, tornadoes were a serious weather threat, and our view was of dusty railroad tracks. People inquired about my "foreign" accent and we were very far away from the ocean that I loved so dearly. Football games were the most exciting pastime but football had never interested me at all.

My husband was busy studying nearly all of the time, there were no relatives nearby, I had no friends at all, and I had an infant son to care for.

I missed the excitement of Boston terribly, my large Irish political family, my friends, the stores, museums, concerts, great restaurants and all of the other ingredients in the culture of that very sophisticated northeastern city.

The Midwest felt like the boondocks and I was a very lonely outsider there.

The few activities available to me included taking a course because free tuition for one class each semester was offered to wives of graduate students.

I hold a PhD degree now but my graduate school education started there, very reluctantly, with my taking one course a semester, mainly because the opportunity was there, it was free, and there was basically so little else to do.

Another option was to walk my son in his stroller to the main campus for treats given that the university's dairy management program ran a store there featuring high quality products like delicious cottage cheese and ice cream.

I walked to the campus dairy nearly every single day, even in the winter. I was already accustomed to cold weather and I learned to plan our excursions around the intense wind that often whipped up off the Midwestern plains.

My son and I loved it. He ate his very first ice cream cone there, chocolate, a typical new mother kind of mistake; I instantly learned the virtues of vanilla. Our daily jaunts together were really the beginning of the lifelong, fun and wonderful relationship that I have for so many years enjoyed with my son.

Although I did not initiate either of these activities with much enthusiasm, I came to cherish those long walks together, the courses were fascinating and I was profoundly influenced by the intellectually stimulating discussions that I had back then with the other graduate students and professors in my classes.

That old cliché is true: we certainly can bloom wherever we are planted.

We create our own opportunities for happiness. Resolve to take whatever steps will be necessary to orient yourself in a new direction. Step out of your comfort zone, investigate whatever options are available in your new area and try out different possibilities. Convert your relocation situation into an opportunity to initiate an unanticipated but wonderful new beginning.