

## How Can I Reduce the Stress of Buying and Selling a Home?

Buying or selling a home ranks high on the list of stress-provoking situations. It's disrupting, uncertain, unsettling and time-consuming, not to mention expensive. Sellers whose homes sell quickly worry that they sold too low. Sellers whose homes take months to sell wonder if they'll ever sell. Buyers agonize over paying too much. And both buyers and sellers complain that the process takes too long.

People move for a variety of reasons, sometimes by choice but often not. Frequently a move is forced on a family because of a death, a divorce, a job loss or an unanticipated transfer. So the reason for the move can be stress-provoking. And since most people dislike change, the very act of moving is bound to be stressful. What can you do to ease the pain?

Pick your real estate agent carefully. A good agent will go out of his or her way to make the move easier for you. Make sure that your agent will communicate with you regularly, and will be available to consult with you on short notice. The unpredictability of the real estate experience can be unnerving. Your agent should review the buying and selling process with you so that you know what to expect.

Buyers moving to a new area should find an agent who has experience working with buyers who are relocating. Your employer can probably provide you with a good recommendation or ask the agent who is helping you sell your home to refer an agent to you. Be sure to ask for a relocation package. It should include information about your new community as well as sample listings of homes for sale.

The Internet is a great source of information. For example, Realtor.com ([www.realtor.com](http://www.realtor.com)) lists 1.3 million properties across the country that are for sale. It includes maps, photos and community facts. So it's possible to preview listings long distance. Buyers who are buying locally can also cut down the time they spend looking at new listings by viewing homes on the Internet.

Getting your home ready to sell can be a huge task. If you're short on time, consider hiring help if you don't have family or friends who can help you out.

Showing your home to prospective buyers is an invasion of your privacy. Furthermore, it's best to leave your house when it's shown. It may make life easier if you plan to eat out when the home is new on the market and is getting a lot of showing activity.

**First Time Tip:** If you're buying or selling a home with a partner, divide the workload so that you don't duplicate efforts. Perhaps one of you can preview new listings and the other can arrange the financing. Make good use of modern technology to lighten your load. Use email, voice mail and facsimile rather than lengthy telephone communications to exchange messages.

Moving always seems to come at an inconvenient time. But even though you feel pressed for time, don't eliminate stress-reducing activities like jogging or cycling from your schedule. Staying involved in your favorite hobbies and sports will add some semblance of order to your chaotic life, as well as provide needed relaxation.

Plan time outs for you and your family. Take day trips or go away for a weekend. If you've been looking for a home for months with no luck, take a break and enjoy yourself. There will undoubtedly be times when you feel stressed out or depressed. Understand that these feelings are normal and they will pass.

