

YOUR CHILDREN AND HOMESTAY

Like you, your children are in a major transition period. But don't despair. There are some things you can do that may help them feel a little less out of sorts.

- **Routine:** Despite the transition, do your best to keep to some kind of routine, even if that just means stopping at regular intervals to ask how your child is doing.
- **Familiar things:** Keep your child's favourite things handy: his/her own cup, plate or utensils, blanket, pillow or stuffed animal, so that they always have something familiar with them.
- **Caring for Toys:** Don't bring out "precious" toys or leave them lying around, as the African children do not generally view property or how to care for it the same as you or your child would.
- **Consistent rules:** Keep the family rules the same.
- **Favourite things time:** At the end of the day, let your children share what their favourite thing and least favourite thing was for that day. Share yours as well. This may help you evaluate how your child is adjusting. For example, if his favourite thing was playing alone, it may be that he needs some time alone to recharge.
- **Positive attitude:** Be positive about all the new things you are experiencing (even if you aren't too happy about some of them).
- **Exploring:** Even though you are there for only a short time, make it a point to get out in the neighbourhood with your child as soon as possible. Knowing your surrounding will make everyone feel more secure. Explore the local shops together.
- **Food:** Encourage your child to try at least a bite of each of the new foods, but don't push too hard, as this may be quite an adjustment for them
- **Making friends:** Help your child make friends. You may need to join in the play until your child is comfortable, especially during the "feeling of the hair" stage of African children getting used to your child.
- **Playing:** Encourage your child to play with the things the African children play with when they are outside. All sorts of things can be made into balls or pull toys.
- **Colouring books:** Sometimes having a couple of colouring books on hand is a great way to give your child and the African children around you a calm, low-key activity to do.
- **Recognizing "home":** Help your child identify which is your gate or doorway (or of the place you are staying) right away so he/she doesn't wander and get lost.
- **Mapping:** Encourage your older children to make their own map of the new neighbourhood.
- **Community:** Make friends with roadside entrepreneurs and gate guards. As you become part of the community, these people will look out for you and your children.
- **Quiet time:** Set aside an hour or so each day for your whole family to go to your room (or any place you can be alone as a family) and spend some time resting, reading, regrouping.

Behaviour: Be aware that some homestay hosts are so anxious for you and your family to have a good experience with them that they will over-indulge your children or let them get away with very bad behaviour. Let your host and hostess know that you insist your children treat them with respect and that you have standards for their behaviour.

Other missionaries: For some children, the homestay phase of induction might get tiresome as the main focus is language and culture learning that isn't always very exciting. If you are in a situation with other missionaries around, you might want to ask if someone would come occasionally and do some homeschool work with your children or take them someplace for a walk or do some arts and crafts with them. This would give your children something to look forward to. There may even be a local youth who would be willing to come in and do projects with your children.