

*Open When*

## You Say Goodbye to a Home You Love

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*Dear Moving Friend,*

It's almost time to stand at the threshold of this house with tears in your eyes and take one last look behind you before you walk out the door. It won't be easy.

You have great things ahead of you, but good memories are hard to leave behind. Even with a new, exciting future ahead, the moment is still bittersweet. Saying goodbye to a home you've loved is hard, whether you're leaving your childhood home, the first home you lived in with your military loved one, or the place where you brought home a newborn—or two. You may feel you are leaving so many memories behind: lonely rooms during deployment, the floors you walked with a fussy baby, the kitchen where you made holiday meals together. You filled your home with friends, good food, used furniture, and laughter. You made this house a home. But when all your belongings are packed up and moved out, it's just a house again, an empty shell with echoes of memories the next resident won't even hear.

It's okay to cry when you leave part of your life behind. At many duty stations, you will leave a house with no expectation of returning. Even if you're leaving a house you own, one you will keep and rent to others, there's no guarantee you will be stationed there again. If you do return in a few years, after more children or other life changes, this house might no longer be a good fit for you. Closing and locking the door that final time is truly the end of a certain chapter of your life. No matter what happens, you can't relive those days again.

Here's what you can do: treasure the memories and walk forward. Before you go, before the movers pack up your belongings, make sure to treasure some memories. Save something physical, like photos,

videos, or souvenirs, so you—and perhaps your children—can enjoy those memories for years to come. Savor the memory of this chapter and prepare to close the door. When you know you have captured the joy of a place, it makes it easier to leave. The memories are about the people, not the place. A house is only a house, but your spouse is home. No matter where you move, you will find home with the one you love.

Everything hard can be done one step at a time, including stepping out the door for the last time. Clean out closets. Pack up the curtains. Once your belongings are packed, it's easier to see that even when you leave this house behind, you will take the memories with you. Keep telling the story of that tiny kitchen, or the creaking door, or the time you painted the wall the wrong color.

Then step into your next empty house and realize its potential. The next house is not full of memories yet, but it soon will be. First, fill it with the pictures and souvenirs and memories of your old house. And then watch as you start to have new adventures and new stories to tell in this one. One day, the empty house you just moved into will feel like a home too.