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## Haul stars

How to de-stress your move

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By Georgia Garvey, RedEye  
 8:52 p.m. CDT, September 26, 2011

You haven't liked it, but you've done it.

You've bribed friends with pizza and beer, you've lugged boxes up flights of stairs, cursing your decision to take the studio on the fifth floor in a building with no elevator. You've gone in to work the next day with sore, aching muscles and lived for

weeks out of cardboard boxes labeled "bedroom" as you mustered up the courage to finish putting everything away.

You've moved. And it was probably hellish.

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"Moving is absolutely stressful," said Howard K. Weissman, a psychologist and clinical director of The Chicago Stress Relief Center. "According to a lot of the different stress polls that come out on a regular basis, moving is even above illness or divorce [in severity]." Moving "may be one of the most stress-producing experiences" for families, according to a 2006 fact sheet from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

And it's definitely that time of year. Oct. 1 is one of the two biggest moving days of the year (the other is May 1), according to experts. Sarah-Jayne Ashenhurst, a sales manager for New City Moving, says Oct. 1 has been booked solid for three weeks for the Chicago-based moving company.

"You have a lot of people who have fall leases coming up," she said, and "October 1 is the day for people who have been hanging on for a while to get out."

As the moving activity evolves into a whirlwind, stress shoots through the roof, too, Weissman said. "For some people, even thinking about the concept of moving can cause stress levels to rise," he said. Weissman counseled battling "the frenetic energy that builds up" by taking time to breathe, relax and plan. "There's a certain amount of emotional and stress hygiene that's necessary."

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5 QUESTIONS

In preparation for the big day, RedEye accumulated a panel of moving "experts," including movers, real estate agents and a woman who has moved 15 times in the last 10 years, to weigh in on the process and how to improve it. Moving will never be easy, they admit, but it doesn't have to be soul-crushing.

AMY LEON, 35, RIVER WEST RESIDENT WHO'S MOVED 15 TIMES IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

What's the most stressful part of moving?

Probably just the organization of getting from one place to the next. I actually have it down to a science. I go through and I create a folder [on the computer] and like a word document. I not only do it by room, I write on a list what I'm putting into [each] box. I have the note attached to that box and I do color-coded dots per room.

Are there more stressful times to move? Or more stressful types of moves?

I would think the most stressful time is when you're moving close to a holiday. You can't get rid of a holiday. You still have family that are pushing and pulling, [asking] "When are you

going to see me?"

Is there anything in moving that's a waste of money—or money well spent?

This is going to sound like I have money to throw away and I don't. I had a company move me. The stress of packing up your house was gone. It was the best thing I have experienced in my life.

What's the biggest moving mistake that people make?

Not being organized. Not knowing what's in what box. Not having any sort of system. [Or] not doing the research on who's moving them. Complaints are a dime a dozen, but when you see a majority of the people saying, they were awful.

What one thing should everyone do to improve their moving experience?

I'm going to sound repetitive, [but] be organized. If you're organized, it takes a little bit of the stress off.

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