

## Empty Nest Syndrome

When children leave home for college or to begin their independent adult lives, many parents experience strong feelings of sadness, guilt and worry. You may be having trouble “letting go,” or acknowledging the sudden reality that you are no longer responsible for your child. At the same time, you are probably proud of your child’s accomplishments, happy for him or her, and perhaps excited about your own freedom. Experts call what you are experiencing “empty nest syndrome.”

Although many parents respond positively to this change, others have difficulty adjusting to this new stage of life. To ease your adjustment:

- › Talk to your child. Your child is probably feeling anxious and uncertain about their new life, too. Reassure them of your love and support. If you feel that you have made mistakes or have regrets about your past approach to parenting, talk to your child about these feelings honestly and work to resolve guilty feelings.
- › Talk to your partner. Be honest about the emotions you are experiencing. Strive to be as sensitive to your spouse’s needs as he or she is to yours.
- › Respect your child’s new independence. Be proud of his or her achievements and maturity. Aim to be supportive, but give your adult child room to grow and learn from his or her own mistakes.
- › Focus on the future, not the past. While it is important to cherish happy memories, anticipate even happier times to come, such as when you may become a grandparent.
- › Reconnect with your partner. Now that you are alone again, take advantage of the opportunity to spend time together and “date” again.
- › Stay active. Get involved in hobbies and activities. Try to exercise regularly and keep fit. Consider volunteering or going back to school to learn new skills. Use your time productively and creatively.
- › Join an empty nesters support group. Get to know others going through the same transitions you are, and share your stories and feelings.
- › Stay disciplined with money. With one less person in the house, you may have extra money. If you are not careful, this extra money can be frittered away quickly. Review your savings and investments and take steps to make sure you are on track with your retirement planning.
- › If feelings of sadness, anxiety or depression persist, contact your employee assistance program for resources and referrals.



### Additional Information

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