


5 Ways to Cope With Empty Nest Syndrome

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When much of your life has been defined as a parent — at least partially — it's hard to adjust to [life without kids in the home](#). Parents who have a particularly difficult transition experience what's known as “empty nest syndrome.”

Empty nest syndrome refers to the feelings of sadness and loss some parents experience when the last child leaves the family home. Although it isn't an official clinical diagnosis, the problem is still very real.

Parents with empty nest syndrome experience a deep void in their lives and they often feel a little lost. They may also struggle to allow their adult children to have autonomy as it's hard for them to let go.

Some couples experience higher levels of conflict when one or both partners have empty nest syndrome. This can compound feelings of loneliness and distress.

Fortunately, there are some things you can do to address empty nest syndrome. If you're struggling to deal with your children moving out of the home, these five strategies can help you cope.

1 Identify Your Roles



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2 Reconnect With Your Partner

You might be totally focused on how your life is going to change after your child leaves, and in your mind, that might not be for the better. Remember those years before you had kids, though, when it was just the two of you? It's time to make more memories as a twosome.

Take time to travel without worrying about who's going to stay with the kids. [Plan date nights](#) without thinking about a babysitter and cook whatever meals you want without considering if a [picky eater](#) is going to complain about it.

If many of your activities centered around going to [kids sporting events](#) and school plays, it may take some extra effort to figure out what other things you can do together. It may take some extra planning to find activities you can enjoy together.

3 Reconnect With Yourself

Did you have any hobbies that you slowly gave up as parenting took over your life? An empty nest means that you have space and time to get back in touch with that side of you, whether it's painting, creating music or cooking.

With all your kids' stuff gone, there is now plenty of space to store the supplies that you need to immerse yourself in the activities that you love. Think about how you want to spend your time.

Perhaps you'd like to pick up a hobby that you pushed aside when you became a parent or maybe there's something you always wanted to try but you never had time.

If you aren't sure what you'd like to do, pick a hobby and give it a try. If you find out it's not for you, try something else. It's a great time to explore your interests.

4 Find New Challenges

Ease the sense of loss that you might feel about your child growing up by finding a new personal or professional challenge to tackle.

Whether you've dreamed of running a road race or you always wanted to redesign a room in your home, now might be the best time to dive in.

You might even take on something even bigger, such as volunteering with a children's charity, which can help you find a place to direct your parenting focus.

Don't make any life-altering decisions in the first six months or so after your child moves out. Don't sell your house or leave your job unless you'd had that planned far in advance.

5 Resist the Urge to Check-In Too Much

If you obsessively monitor your child's social media accounts, call every morning, and spend your time worrying about how your child is doing in college or in his new place, you won't be able to move on with your life.

Coping with empty nest syndrome means beginning the process of letting go and letting your child grow into an independent adult. Of course, you should certainly check in on your child's well-being sometimes. But, [give your child some privacy](#), — and the space to make a few mistakes.

A Word From Verywell

No matter what you do to shift your focus from your empty nest, it won't change initial feelings of sadness. It's natural to feel a sense of loss and trying to distract yourself or suppress your feelings won't necessarily fix things.

You need to grieve what you've lost. One phase of your life is over. Your children are no longer living at home and time has likely passed by faster than you ever imagined.

It's OK to feel sad. However, you don't want to get stuck in a place of sadness.

Coming to terms with this new phase in your life can be tough. But most parents find they're able to adjust to their new roles as being parents of young adults and they develop a new sense of normal.

If you find that empty nest syndrome is getting worse, instead of better, or it doesn't resolve within a couple of months, talk to a mental health professional. Your symptoms may grow worse and your feelings of loneliness or emptiness may require treatment.

Article Sources

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