



Empty Nest Syndrome

What is it?

Parents may experience Empty Nest Syndrome which are mixed emotions, particularly sadness and loss of purpose, when children move out of the house because of college, marriage, or any other reason. Children are leaving the *nest* of the family and off to start a new chapter of their lives.

How Can Empty Nest Syndrome Affect You?

Many parents have feelings of:

- **Sadness**
- **Restlessness**
- **Anxiety**
- **Nervousness**

They miss being part of their children's life – Empty Nest Syndrome mostly affects women and those who play the main care-giver role. Parents may feel a loss of purpose, resulting in an identity crisis. With no children in the home, it stimulates a new solitude. Parents

may struggle to adjust to their new routine; even something as little as doing less laundry may bring upon sadness. When feelings are not addressed, parents are vulnerable to depression and alcoholism. Some might turn to substance abuse to numb the feelings.

How Can Empty Nest Syndrome Affect the Marital Unit?

Once a marital unit completes child-rearing responsibilities, the two parents might feel a loss a purpose. They've spent so much time raising their kids that they lose the emotional connection towards each other. As each parent has dissimilar reactions to a child's leaving, it stands to reason that those personal waves will ripple towards the marriage. The good news is that couples also report a higher satisfaction through Empty Nest Syndrome. They are able to rekindle the feelings of closeness again due to the absence of stresses and emotional focus of parenting. They can return to the relaxed phase of "couplehood" that can be highly rewarding and enjoyable.

How to Prepare for the Empty Nest

It's not easy to move into a stage of the Empty Nest period. It is normal to find this transition difficult. Talk to someone whom you trust and lean on loved ones for support – many other adults have experienced this before. If you still feel a sense of sadness and restlessness, seek help from a professional. Everyone experiences Empty Nest Syndrome uniquely, and there are counsellors who can personalize a plan for you. It would also be beneficial to work out a pattern of communication with your kids and schedule in times to call, video chat, or visit. Be enthusiastic for them, and always offer your support when they need it! This is also a time where you can reconnect with your partner and friends – continue to strengthen your relationships.

Resources

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