

Empty Nest-Is there life after Kids?

Kids leaving home is one of the developmental truths that we can anticipate. We all know that as we raise them, eventually they are going to be gone. But, how did it happen so fast? It seemed like it would take forever. Children leaving home is bittersweet for parents. On the one hand we are relieved and gratified that it is over; on the other hand it forces us to confront some tougher emotional issues. The most obvious is LOSS, the loss of our child's presence. Our relationship with our child needs to be redefined. We are no longer responsible for meeting their basic needs. What are the choices: how do we remain a parent when we are no longer "parenting".

Another issue this brings to the forefront is that we are AGING. Having a grown child is a clear reminder that we have crossed into middle age. There is a certain amount of envy when we look at our child; remembering our own youth and knowing how much the world has to offer them.

One more reality is that our life no longer revolves around the child and we must re-introduce ourselves to our mate. For years because of the demands of raising children, many people are distracted from their marriage. We can take the opportunity of this renewed freedom and become just a twosome again.

What do we do? **Talk through feelings with family.** Remember this is a normal response to a normal occurrence. **Redefine Parenting Role.** Find creative ways to be involved. Letters, phone calls, care packages, being supportive. Show confidence in their ability to make it on their own. Let them define a new "Parental role". **Revisit Marital Relationship.** Recognize the teamwork that prepared your child for their adult life. Cherish the new found freedom and the increased time together. Continue to model a strong, loving relationship to your child.

If for some reason, you are concerned that your response to an EMPTY NEST is too great. Call your EAP, let us help.

Mercy EAP Services 319-398-6694 or 1-800-383-6694