



## Tending to an Empty Nest

When your children get ready to move out for the first time, a big life change is in store, especially if it is your last child who is leaving home. Roles shift as your children take on more adult responsibilities, and as you take on a new role in their lives. You will no longer be there to buy food or fulfill other daily parental responsibilities, and the new lifestyle will take some getting used to. Some parents may question their self-worth. Others delight in the newfound freedom and extra space in the house. Some feel lonely or a mixture of all these feelings! Being an "empty nester" can cause stress, but there are things you can do to adjust to this new chapter in your life.

### What You Can Do

- **Embrace change.** Realize that your relationship with your child will change, and that you will find new roles and perspectives. You may have enjoyed your role as a caretaker, but now it's important to move into a new phase of your relationship.
- **Accept your feelings.** Acknowledge your sadness at missing your child or your delight in having space to yourself.
- **Find support.** Talk to other parents who are also recent empty nesters. They may have similar feelings or concerns.
- **Brush up on technology.** Use this opportunity to learn and stay connected with your child through newer technology, such as use Facebook, Skype, or Twitter.
- **Encourage problem-solving.** When your child calls with an obstacle they are dealing with, offer support and advice, but let your child ultimately try to figure it out for him or herself.
- **Take time.** Don't expect to adjust to this transition right away. Be patient with yourself as you get into the groove of a new lifestyle. Also, try to hold off on making big decisions, such as selling your house and moving to a small apartment, until you feel that you have adjusted to the child's absence.
- **Do something.** Investigate opportunities you had previously put on hold, such as learning a new hobby, taking a course, or going on a romantic vacation with your partner.
- **Volunteer your time.** Become a big sister or a big brother, work with the elderly, or teach someone to read. Whatever your skills and interests, there is someone who could use your help and enthusiasm. You'll not only keep yourself occupied while you are adjusting to a new lifestyle, but you'll also have the satisfaction of filling a huge need in the community.
- **Think about what you want.** Whether you parent full-time or have another job, a child leaving home is a major change. Think about what you want from this phase of your life. When the kids are away, you may have more time to achieve your personal goals.
- **Pay attention to your partner.** When your last child has left your home, your relationship may change. Check in with each other to share your feelings, thoughts, and plans. It can be hard to readjust to being a couple again after years of sharing the house with children. Acknowledge the change and work with it. A new sense of privacy can be fulfilling to recent empty nesters.
- Finally, remember that your son or daughter is moving on to learn, grow, and change--not to move away from you. Be proud that you helped raise a competent young adult who is setting off to reach his or her goals.

For more information about family concerns, visit the website or call the toll free number listed below.



[www.apshelplink.com](http://www.apshelplink.com)



Company Code: CHANDLER



1-800-327-2384