Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Empty Nest Syndrome: When the Kids Leave Home

You never thought this day would come, but the child you raised has now moved out on their own. Your home is yours again. Some parents jump for joy, while others are surprised at their emotional reaction and how much they miss them. Now that they are gone, things will change (some changes better than others). Here are some helpful tips on what to expect, and how to avoid the negative effects of empty nest syndrome.

Emotional Reactions

It is natural to feel sad or even cry when your last or only child leaves the home. You do not have to feel guilty or crazy for being emotional. You're grieving a loss and the end of a major stage in your life. However, keep in mind that your role as a parent is not over, and your relationship is not lost, it will simply be different.

The Good and the Bad

There are many factors in this life transition that you'll find positive or beneficial. Have you considered:

- Your grocery bills will decrease
- Your house stays cleaner, longer
- You'll have time to yourself
- There's food in the fridge
- There is less dirty laundry
- You can regain control of your television and DVR
- Decreased water bill

How to Cope

Like many of life's transitions, it will take time to adjust. There are steps that you can take to make the transition easier.

- Pursue activities. There may be activities you have always longed to do, or had to put on hold for family responsibilities. Take this as an opportunity to work on your 'wish list' of activities you want to do (i.e. travel, learn a new sport, take dance lessons etc.)
- Keep in touch. Think outside of the box when it comes to keeping in contact with your child/ children. These are kids who grew up with technology. Consider learning how to text, or using Skype (a free service that allows you to make calls using a web cam).
- Re-connect. Use this time to reconnect with friends. Some may be in the same stage of life as you and will appreciate the support. For those that are married, use this time to reconnect as a couple.
- Make short and long term goals for how you would like to spend your money and time. Couples should have this discussion together.
- Seek professional help. If you are experiencing severe symptoms like excessive crying, feeling hopeless, or marital struggles, talk to a counselor.

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