



Tips for Coping with Empty Nest Syndrome

Created by Jen Mirabile, UO Human Resources

Presented by Mandy Lu, MA, UO Counseling Center

College 101 for Parents with College Bound Students
Hosted by UO Human Resources

Empty Nest Syndrome-What is it?

- Phenomenon that occurs when parents experience feelings of sadness and loss when their children leave for college
- Not a clinical diagnosis; however, the suffering is very real for some parents.

It's OK to feel this way...

- Feelings of sadness and a sense of loss can be overwhelming when one or all of your children have left for college.
- Don't compare your feelings with other parents....every parent experiences it differently so the habit of comparing won't serve you.
- Your role and identity as a parent is changing and this can be bewildering for some parents.

It's OK to feel this way...

- You may struggle with letting go and giving your college bound student space.
- You may experience anxiety and worry about your child's safety away from home.
- Other children at home may also feel the effects of their sibling leaving for college.

Coping with Empty Nest Syndrome

- You aren't who you used to be and not yet who you will be, but a new you is on the way.
 - ✓ You won't instantly be able to change.....but gradually you'll discover new ways to engage your time, energy and thoughts.
 - ✓ Stay positive and look at this time from a position of hope and possibility.

Coping with Empty Nest Syndrome

- This is a new chapter in your life that you may need to plan for.
 - ✓ Reconnect with things in your life that are important to you; partner, younger children, your friends.
 - ✓ Reconnect with yourself; your interests and new opportunities or challenges

Coping with Empty Nest Syndrome

- Accept the timing of college – this is what you and they have worked towards.
- Resist the urge to check-in too much with your child but keep in touch.
 - ✓ Let your child lead in the amount of communication; your expectations may not be theirs. Have a conversation about what they would like before they leave for school.

Coping with Empty Nest Syndrome

- You are and were a good role model so believe in your children. Your concerns are normal. You can be concerned about your children while also trusting them.
- Know that your child still needs you and will throughout their life; when they do call for help, ask them how they want to handle a problem and how you can support them.

Coping with Empty Nest Syndrome

- Crying, even sobbing, happens and sometimes when you least expect it.
 - ✓ Be gentle and patient with yourself
 - ✓ Plan for support; make lunch plans with a friend
 - ✓ Use your Employee Assistance Program benefits and talk with a counselor if you need more than a friendly lunch.

Need More Support

- It's a vulnerable time for parents when their child leaves for college. Parents may be susceptible to depression, alcoholism, identity crisis, and marital conflicts.
- Seek help from a counseling professional.
 - Contact the UO's Employee Assistance Program

Employee Assistance Program

- Employees, their dependents, and eligible household members are eligible for service
- Professional counselors can provide private and confidential services over the phone or in office. You can call 800-433-2320 (available 24/7) to speak to the counselor.
- If needed, they can refer you to a provider in your medical plan.

When to seek professional help...

- The distress you experience begins to impair your daily functions
- The distress does not lessen or go away after 6 months
- Extreme fluctuations in mood
- Heavy substance use

Let's hear from our.....

PARENTS