

# Let's Talk: Coping with an empty nest

***Presenter – Lynn Borteck, Clinical Counselor***

Hi, my name is Lynn Borteck. Let's talk about empty nest syndrome. What is empty nest syndrome? It's feelings of loss and maybe sadness when your house becomes child-free. You might be used to a household of activity, and the phone ringing, and kids coming and going. And when your children leave to get married, or go to school, or to move out on their own, it can be a big change.

## Feelings of loss

Empty nest time can be a time of conflicted wishes. Naturally, we want our kids to grow up and succeed, that's why we raise them. But at the same time, when the chicks leave the nest, there could be a feeling of sadness and loss. And we also might worry. How are they going to pay their bills? How are they going to find their way around in a new city? These are all pretty natural concerns for parents.

## Letting go

So really, it's about letting go. And letting go can be hard. Why? Well, because we worry about our kids and also maybe it goes back to when you left home. And what your experiences were. You may carry some of that with you. It's a time of transition. And any time of transition in a family is a challenging time.

## How can you prepare

You might be thinking how can you get ready for the empty nest syndrome? And there are ways. Number one, you can know that it's coming. You know when your kids are getting ready to move on and move out. Number two, you can know that it'll pass like every other phase of parenting. There were phases of parenting I'm sure that you were hoping would pass quickly. There's diaper stages, toilet training, going to kindergarten, and so forth and so on. This stage will pass too. Each stage is normal. And finally, look forward to the stages that are coming next because you might now be able to get back into a career. You will have more free time on your hands to do things that you like to do. And don't forget, you may become a grandparent at some point and have a whole other experience ahead of you.

## Simple ways to help

Here's some specific remedies for the empty nest syndrome. First, get ready. You know it's coming so look into that career that you wanted to start. Or the career that you wanted to get started again. Or start making plans with your spouse or partner so that you can do more things together. Also, think of ways you can stay in touch with your kids. Just because they leave, doesn't mean that you can't visit them, email, go on social media, text, talk on the phone. Stay positive. Remember how you handled other transitions in your life and I bet you'll get some inspiration from that.

## Celebrate your accomplishment

Another thing you can do is to reframe the empty nest and think of it as a great success on your part. You raised your kids and now you're launching them. Good for you! Also, if you find that you need help because your feelings of being blue don't go away, reach out for help. Good luck, you can do this!

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