

Empty Nest Syndrome... it's a thing!

When it comes to parenting, it's not uncommon for a large part of a person's identity to be wrapped up in that role. In fact, many parents would describe parenting as the most important, challenging, time-consuming, and meaningful thing they will ever do... And it goes by so quickly.

Parents need to prepare for this and here are some tips to help you do so:

- **Recognize parenting is still needed.** Your role as a parent is never “complete.” Even though your kids are out of the house, they will still need you and you still have a lot to give. This may look more like mentoring than parenting, so stay connected to your kids and find ways to support them.
- **Don't check in too much.** Teach your kids to handle things on their own! Reducing your kid's dependence on you will likely improve their self-worth and confidence. This will help them make a smooth transition into adulthood.
- **Rekindle the “spark” with your partner.** Focus on your relationship again. Plan activities that you couldn't previously do with kids at home, for example a weekend getaway. Set aside time to do things together, plan date nights... deepen your connection and rekindle the romance. Allow yourself time for adjustment.
- **Pursue your interests.** It is now time to put yourself (and your marriage) first. You now have the opportunity to focus on the things you enjoy. Explore new activities... the options are endless.
- **Reconnect with friends and extended family.** Plan activities with friends on a regular basis, whether it is grabbing coffee, having lunch, planning a game night or hosting a party, social events can be a good way to reduce the feeling of loneliness. Also consider reconnecting with extended family. Social connections have a positive impact on your health.
- **Travel.** Traveling has a number of mental health benefits. One survey of nearly 500 adults in the U.S. found that frequent travel enhances energy, focus, attention, empathy, and creativity. Travel oftentimes creates a meaningful and memorable shared experience that you can enjoy with a loved-one and another great way to rekindle the “spark” with your partner.

Negative symptoms from an empty nest oftentimes catches parents by surprise, even though they know it's coming. If you find yourself in this situation, take a deep breath and relax. While this new season in your life will take some getting used to, it can also be a time of change, growth, exploration, and improved quality of life.

Questions? Contact us at 363ISR.W.ART.363ISR.W@us.af.mil or at 757-764-9316