

Get healthy

Take advantage of your new freedom and use the time to get fit mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally. It might be watching a funny movie to make you laugh or reading to keep you mentally fit. Joining a walking club, jogging, exercise or dance classes will keep you physically fit. Set yourself the challenge of working to improve one area at a time until your life is balanced in all these areas.

Create happy connections

Your children may have left home, but you can still have a close relationship. Stay in touch through visits, phone calls, emails, texts or social media. Before they go, chat through expectations on both sides. You don't want them to feel smothered or have their freedom stifled. Remember that they'll be busy and that they'll be spending time making new friends. They may not be in touch as often as you'd like, but that doesn't mean they don't care.



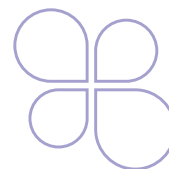
Support for couples at every stage of their relationship



For more information, articles and tips on family life visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

You might like to:

- Read *The Sixty Minute Marriage* by Rob Parsons www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop
- Listen to our regular *Marriage Challenge Podcast* www.careforthefamily.org.uk/marriagechallenge
- Visit the *Marriage* section of our website www.careforthefamily.org.uk/marriagesupport



Care for the Family is a registered charity and has been working to strengthen family life since 1988. Our aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

For information on the wider work of Care for the Family visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

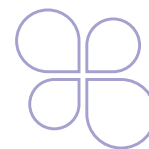
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Top Tips For Marriage



The Empty Nest



When we start out as parents, life is so busy and full that most of us never think much about what it will be like when our children become adults. But before you know it, that day arrives and your little ones have grown and flown, leaving you with an empty nest. It can be a defining moment in your life. You can't stop it or ignore it, but if you embrace it and plan ahead, it can mark a new season of fulfilment, joy and opportunity, to be anticipated with excitement rather than dread. Here are a few tips to help you prepare for your empty nest.

Before they go, let them grow

Your job is to help your children become independent young adults who can launch into the world without you continually by their side. Don't leave this to the last minute. Let them go a little at a time, teaching them independence and responsibility. When they finally leave, you can watch them fly knowing you have prepared them well!

Expect to be emotional

As your children prepare to leave and for a while after, you will feel a range of emotions (and so will they). You might experience relief, sorrow, joy and guilt all within a day! That is normal and time will settle your emotions. It might help to talk to others or write down how you

feel. If you feel overwhelming sadness that persists, seek professional help.

Relax and reflect

No overflowing laundry basket or daily runs to fill the fridge, so what to do? Don't rush into too many things too soon. Give yourself space to enjoy this time, to relax, and to adjust to your new life post-active parenting. Take time to reflect on the past and consider how you will renegotiate your relationship with your now-adult child. You will always be their parent, but your role is different now. You get to cheer them on from the side-lines rather than being their 24/7 coach.

Think about you!

When you're ready, start to think about you! Perhaps try something new: a hobby, job, course or club. Picture the future as an open door of opportunity, not something to dread. Your children will see you living life to the full, and this will reassure them that they don't need to worry about you.

Refresh your space

After years of noisy family activity, the silence can be deafening. Turning on your favourite music can fill that empty space, lift your spirits and create a new uplifting atmosphere. A simple makeover, like a new set of cushions or fresh towels for the bathroom, can help reclaim the space and make you feel good about coming home.

Revive relationships

Rekindle passion for your spouse or partner with regular date nights. If you have been parenting alone, now you have time and space to invest in friendships old and new and to enjoy the company of others outside your home.

Menu makeover

Having spent years cooking family meals and battling with your kids to get them to eat their broccoli, why not start a new tradition with your spouse or your friends and have fun experimenting with new cuisine and recipes to suit the adults? Have a regular 'Come dine with me' night or something else that doesn't feel like a chore and will help you relax and have fun.

