



Wikipedia's **Definition of the Empty Nest Syndrome:** The feeling of grief and loneliness parents feel when their children leave home for the first time, such as to live on their own or attend college or university. It is not a clinical condition.

Since young adults moving out from their family's house is generally a normal and healthy event, the symptoms of empty nest syndrome often go unrecognized. This can result in depression and a loss of purpose for parents, since the departure of their children from "the nest" leads to adjustments in parents' lives. **Empty nest syndrome is especially common in full-time Mothers.**

"**Empty Nesting**" can and should be one of the most "fulfilling" and "satisfying" time in the life of a marriage! However, if the marriage is unhappy and unstable than the parents are more susceptible to "the empty nest syndrome" resulting in an identity crisis or loss of purpose in the absence of the children. This can lead to what we commonly call "a mid-life crisis".

Typically, the marriages that suffer the most are those who have built their lives around the kids putting them always first before the spouse. This is much more common than one would think and many parents themselves are unaware of this pattern of behavior and in most cases the families appear outwardly to be enormously healthy and successful. Most of this damage and erosion in the health of the marriage is hidden until the nest is empty and then the "emptiness" in the marriage is fully illuminated. Too many years of neglect can take its toll and when the kids are gone there is nothing to replace or distract from the truth of what remains a total lack of intimacy and closeness in the marriage. This can be frightening and deeply painful, but the wonderful thing about the 'empty nest' is the freedom from so many responsibilities of parenting that have hampered much needed time and attention to one's spouse!

It's never too late to rekindle the fire of love and tenderness in your marriage! But.... this requires a fair amount of commitment and effort on behalf of both Husband and wife. Both must make personal changes and re-align priorities to meet the needs of their spouse. I would like to offer a few points of reference to consider for couples who may be suffering from the "empty nest" syndrome.

## **PRIORITES**

Every parent enters into family life with the good intentions, to give their family the best of everything. One of the pit-falls we face in our society is the dis-ordered list of priorities that we are conditioned to practice in a very secular world. The unprecedented pressure and competition to succeed and be accepted in the mainstream has caused an epidemic of parents who put their kids and others at the center of their lives, leaving God and the marriage to simmer on the "back burner" for Sundays and vacations, here in, lies the fundamental cause of dysfunction and brokenness in marriage and family.

Bottom- line, the "secret to success" in building a satisfying and fulfilling family life in its prime AND empty nest IS the correct ordering of priorities. We must live every aspect of our lives always keeping these priorities at the forefront of our minds.

**1 — God** – Keep the Lord always in 1st place, in prayer, in action and in the ordering of priorities each and every day. Everything, from spouse, to work and play must stem from a life in Christ! Following God's will in your individual state and/or vocation in life can literally mean the difference between 'life and death'!!

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

"No one can serve two masters, he will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" Mathew 6:24

**2 — Spouse** – Marriage is a sacrament and should be cherished and nourished like watering a garden to keep it alive! Not at the expense of your children, but most certainly

for the “sake” of your children. If your marriage is not strong and secure, you cannot give your children what they require and deserve. A beautiful marriage is a great legacy to leave your children. Beware who you befriend. Loyal and trusted friendships are rare and should be protected but your spouse should always come first before others.

“So they are no longer two, but one flesh, therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate”. Mathew 19:6

**3 — Children** – Parenting is one of God’s greatest gifts! Our chicks are only entrusted to us by God for a little while before they are meant to “fly the coup”!.! As Christian parents, one of our greatest responsibilities is to prepare our kids to leave the home, live independent, responsible and productive lives with the ultimate goal of reaching Heaven! In some cases, parents, may treat children as possessions or extensions of themselves, living vicariously through them and making them the identity and focus of the marriage and family. This can lead to a variety of developmental and emotional problems which prevent the family from growing and separating in a healthy way at the appropriate time.

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward” Psalm 127:3-5

**4 — Extended Family** – Extended family and In-laws bring great joy, support and enrichment your family and marriage. But sometimes, they can cause added stress, pressure and even division in the marriage and family. See correct priorities, and always seek God’s will in prayer when in doubt about first things first.

**5 — Others** – Of course, we must devote time, attention and energy to work and to play, finding the right balance and using the ordered priorities to measure how to give God, Spouse, Children and others their due. Keeping in mind everything flows from the first priority and recognizing we cannot do it all, all of the time! And that’s ok!!

“Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and decay destroy and thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where

neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be". Mathew 6:19-21

"Amen I say to you, whatever you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me".  
Mathew 25:40

## **'EMPTY NEST' TO AN "ABUNDANT NEST"!**

Renovating the Marriage

**TIME and ATTENTION** – enjoy the added alone time together now that it's just the two of you, get to know each other again and take better care of each other!

**ROMANCE and SPONTANEITY** – be spontaneous now that you can be! No more track, soccer, ballet practices and endless commitments to adhere to in your schedule! Try new things and enjoy the present and spur of the moment fun!

**ADVENTURE and DISCOVERY** – try new things, move, downsize, change it up and remember all the reasons why you fell in love and you will experience the depth of love you have created together and in your family to be the most profound gift!

**STUDY and GROW-** go back to school, take a cooking class, pursue a hobby or activity you never had time for before during all the years of devotion as spouse and parent!

**CHANGE-** don't be afraid to mix it up, let go of past hurts, bad relationships and focus on growing in virtue and finding ways to become the best version of yourself, don't be afraid of change!

**HEALTH and WELLNESS** – now you have more time to dedicate to caring for yourself. Start a new exercise program, more time to pray and serve others in your communities. Serving others is the best gift you can give yourself.

**FREEDOM and TRAVEL** – empty nesters have more flexibility and increased resources to enjoy travel and some leisure time! Now that the constant commitment of all the kids' activities is in the rear-view mirror! Go!

**LESS STRESS** more PEACE and QUIET – enjoy this!!!!

**CONTENTMENT AND GRATITUDE** – for the many blessings of children, the family, many good years of health and gainful employment! Be grateful and count the blessings! Gratitude heals all wounds!

**AWARENESS THAT THE TIME REMAINING IS LIMITED** – what do you want to do with the time you have left? Re-evaluate your time commitments and make appropriate changes according to the correct priorities

**VOLUNTEER ONESELF IN SERVICE TO THE LORD AND HIS CHURCH**

**PARENTING in the “EMPTY NEST”**

Learn to be HANDS-OFF

**OBSERVE AND ENJOY-** your wonderful Young adult children

**CHERISH THE MEMORIES-** but don't dwell in the past, focus on making new ones

**WISDOM** – best thing you can offer your kids is the lessons you learned from suffering the consequences of bad decisions. But don't be attached to the outcome, they may not take heed, accept it.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT-** revel in the fact that you have come so far and zero in on areas where you might help others

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE** – by now empty nesters are self-aware! Forgive each other their faults and remember your face should always reflect the love of God for your spouse!! Love unconditionally.

**RENEWED ZEST FOR LIFE-** live each day to the full

**DISCIPLINE YOURSELF – LET GO**

**GIVE YOUR KIDS SPACE** – allow them to make their own choices and mistakes, don't insert yourself or try to control, they will come to you naturally and in their own way and time. Then your relationship will mature and grow

**ENABLE THEM TO INDEPENDENCE AND SUCCESS** – don't bail them out at every turn! Gradually wean them from the dependence both financial and otherwise, if you never take away the NET, they may never learn to fly on their own! Many parents hold continue to support their adult children in effort to hold onto them, this is co-dependence, not healthy!

**RESPECT** – their choices even if you disagree with them. Never let your differences of opinions (i.e. politics, boyfriends, girlfriends) prevent you from demonstrating your unconditional love for them. Love them the way Christ has loved you!

**ALLOW THEM TO FAIL** – be there to support them without condemnation. One of the hardest things to do as parents is to watch your child fail and/or suffer the consequences. The main thing is to give them the tools to cope with failure and conflict resolution. Teach them a good work ethic and show them by your example what real perseverance in trials looks like!

**TRUST IN THE GOOD LORD** – to protect them as He loves them even more than you do!

**PRAYER** – pray for **HOLY SPOUSES** for your adult children!