

QUARTERLY

Balancing Life, Work & Wellness

EAP Solutions

2008 FALL EDITION

Part of University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Empty Nest

An empty nest does not have to lead to an empty life.

Parenting Adult Children

Parenting roles and family dynamics change as your children grow older.

College Ready Family

Some simple suggestions for parents to help with the transition as a child goes to college.

Welcome!

This quarter's theme is parenting an adult child. As always, we welcome your feedback at askeap@eapsolutions.com.

DidUKnow?

EAP Solutions is changing its name to **LifeSolutions!** You can continue to expect great support and service from us. Our new name reflects a new emphasis on providing solutions for all of your concerns related to life, work and wellness.

LifeSolutions

Here's just a few of the changes you will see over the next couple of months:

- New website design and navigation
- Podcasts and Webcasts on pertinent topics
- E-subscribe to our newsletters and other publications
- More access to telephonic counseling
- New navigation to our **WorkLife** portal Resource Center

Visit our website at:
www.eapsolutions.com

Use our **WorkLife** Resource Center
E-mail us for your username:
askeap@eapsolutions.com

Call us at:
1.800.647.3327

Surviving an Empty Nest

Your nest may be empty but your life can be full.

A kid going off to college is another big transition for families. Whether it is the first or last child, there's more space in the house and a change in routine. "Empty-nest syndrome" is the name given to the constellation of feelings many parents have when they no longer have a baby "chick" in their nest. You might experience sadness, wonder "what do I do now?" and realize an impact on how your marriage functions.

These reactions used to belong almost exclusively to women but today both men and women experience empty nest because many women work and men are far more involved in their children's lives.

Success in transitioning to the empty nest phase of life includes a number of tasks. The most important ones are encouraging your child to "fly away", developing a new relationship with your spouse that is not about your child and deciding on your own priorities.



TIPS TO HELP EMPTY NEST SYNDROME

Plan ahead... It's never too early to start planning and talking to your child about the future.

Do something... Volunteer, take a class, find a new hobby or pick up an old one.

Congratulate yourself... Although the job of being a parent is never done, you have reached a goal. You have raised an independent young adult, which is no easy task. Give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done.

Get to know your spouse... This is a time for you and your spouse to rekindle your romance, have privacy in the house, travel and get to know one another again.

Get support... One problem with empty-nest syndrome is that you won't get much sympathy from those who never went through it. To them it is just a normal part of life. So look to someone who went through it. Talking with your partner will help you feel closer each other.



Prepare your children... Preparing your children to live independently is good for your child and it's also good for you. Can they do laundry? Balance a check book? If not, teach them now. If they are not prepared, they will continue to rely on you, which isn't good for either of you, so make sure you have taught them the essentials. Then try hard to **let them go** and be proud of yourself for the fine job of parenting you have done. ▼

Article was adapted from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5818627/>

PARENTING ADULT CHILDREN:

A NEW CHALLENGE UNIQUE TO OUR CULTURE

Isn't it wonderful when your children have grown up? Isn't that really the end result we are striving for as we raise them? Whatever age they are, they are still our "children"...but family roles and responsibilities inevitably change as our children become adults.

In most families, some clear agreement exists as to appropriate roles and boundaries for parents and their young children. But when those children reach young adulthood, new definitions of roles and boundaries must evolve. Parents are bound to encounter problems if they attempt to set limits on the behavior of an adult child, unless the child's actions directly affect the parents. Providing an adult child with behavioral choices with associated consequences, as one would with a young child or teen, is also usually inappropriate. In healthy adult relationships, the role of parent shifts from that of an authority figure to that of an advisor. If the parental role does not change, frustration and rebellion can result. A child may distance emotionally from his or her parents, or conversely, perpetuate an ongoing parent-child relationship that fosters an unhealthy, childlike dependency.

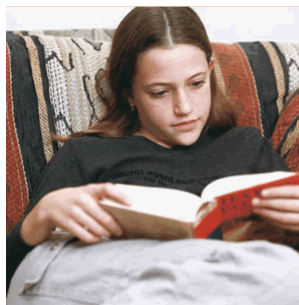


Parenting adult children is challenging in ways that are unique to the generations living today. People are living longer, more robust lives than those of previous generations, while geographical distance and mobility have diffused relatives and their relationships. In many families, the transfer of wealth has become an important focus. These factors inevitably affect the relational dynamics between parents and their adult children.

We can all take the lead in our families by reviewing and revising our own roles and boundaries, tuning up our communication practices, and working to extend respect, trust and love to one another. We can stretch to take the high road in life's many decisions. We can make healthy compromises with family members when needed, even though we may sometimes feel uncomfortable, and learn to focus on ways to love and accept one another as adults. ▀

TIPS

- Start encouraging children early to think through problems.
- Encourage children in their late teens and early twenties to make independent decisions.
- Consider family and individual counseling if you discover challenging dependency issues within your family, especially if your family has suffered from the effects of alcohol or drug abuse by one or more family members.
- Check out Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon\Alateen support groups.
- Realize that in situations where parents or adult children are unable to take care of themselves, it may not be appropriate to expect them to live independently.
- Explore financial support and residential programs that may be available to your family member as well as support options (e.g., support groups for caregivers, NAMI support groups) for you.
- Maintain respect. Allow for as much independence as possible, whether you live together or not.



The College Ready Family

Sending a son or daughter off to college for the first time has to be a very difficult move for most parents. It is a big commitment and a major step toward independent living. Of course, most parents are glad to see children move on to this important stage of their lives. But, at the same time, parents know that the relationship will never be quite the same again. Mixed feelings can be expressed in lots of ways: sometimes kids become overly solicitous toward one another as they anticipate the big separation.

• Separation from Family

It is important to talk to your child about living with people who are not related. They will often be paired with one or two roommates, usually in close quarters. You need to try to allay any fears they might have about these new relationships. Remind your child that good friendships take time and effort to develop.

• Alcohol

While most 18 year olds are reluctant to discuss this subject with Mom and Dad, your child still needs your guidance. Discuss drinking responsibly and safely and remind them that many students choose not to drink.

• Signs of Freshman Stress

Typical freshman symptoms are lower grades, weight gain and homesickness. It's important to listen for signs of low mood or unhappiness. Parents should be patient and supportive and keep in mind that grades may temporarily suffer because of the strains of the initial adjustment. Parents also shouldn't hesitate to stay in touch by emailing, phoning, sending letters and care packages. And when you do talk, tell them the latest, but don't pry.

• Additional Help

If your child talks about wanting to take a year off, whether because of the pressure or just because he or she is homesick, don't rule it out without a fair hearing. Try to encourage them to give it some more time and speak to an advisor or college's counseling center. Freshman blues often do pass but taking a year off isn't the worst thing that can happen.

Information obtained from:

<http://www.helium.com/items/223787-you-are-always-a-parent-tips-for-parenting-adult-children>

<http://drpaulwhite.com/blog/category/parenting-adult-children/>

http://www.ehow.com/how_2087045_get-along-grown-children.html

Read the full article at:

http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2001/08/24/backtoschool/main308005.shtml?source=search_story