

# ‘Empty Nest’ When Kids Leave Home



Relate NI

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Relate



Being a parent is challenging, there are certain milestones we look forward to and others, we dread. After raising and caring for your child for 18 years or so, of their life, you are faced with this change, they are moving out to attend University. As a parent we are giving up control and accepting our child has become more independent. This can seem overwhelming, and as much as we want to be supportive and encouraging of our child, we have a lot of mixed emotions ourselves. So, let's look at this a little further.

## Mental Well-Being

Acknowledge your emotions and feelings. You may be experiencing mixed emotions. Excitement for your child, sadness, feeling scared, and concern over the transition that is looming.

Self-care: explore options for self-care that will help you to unwind, and consider shifting your focus onto looking after yourself. Overthinking, for example, can lead to negative self-talk which in turn, can lead to low self-worth and value. Applying self-care helps keep your mental well-being in check.

Now is the time for you! Take this time to think about what you would like to do with your time, how you would like to spend your evenings, book a midweek break with your partner, take up a new hobby, or take a class at the local college. There is a wealth of possibilities!

Keep track of how you are feeling and coping, you may find it beneficial to seek help or guidance from a counsellor/professional.



## Relationships matter

Link in with support network: Friends and family who have gone through similar situations can help you realise, you aren't alone. Regardless of whether they have been, or are going through the same or similar things, having emotional support through these times is essential for venting and/or talking through how you are coping, let alone help you feel supported and listened to.

Don't forget your partner: if you are in a romantic relationship, when kids are involved, partners can go on the back burner while we parent. We can rediscover our feelings for our partner at this point in our lives. So, take this time to talk, go on trips, nights out etc.

Note down the dates your child will be home for the holidays. This can give you a goal/aim for family get-togethers as well as helping keep you optimistic. This also can help you consider what time you have with your child out of the house.

Arrange time with your child: Scheduling a day and time when you can call and spend time catching up with them about their experiences at university as well as them getting caught up with what has been going on at home. This allows you to keep connected and feel connected. Just bear in mind at certain busy times e.g. exam times, your child may not be able to keep connected as frequently. This is where communication is important. Keeping in contact also helps you know your child is safe and well.