

## Empty Nest Syndrome Dealing with Empty Nest Syndrome: All You Need To Know

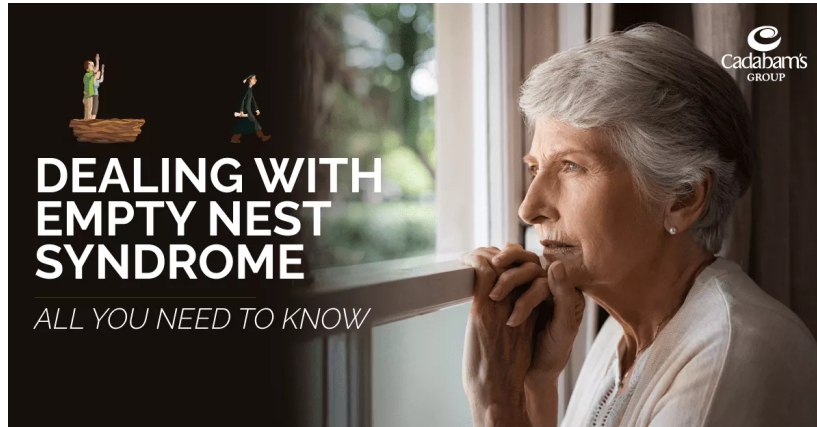
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### What is Empty Nest Syndrome?

Empty nest syndrome involves feelings of sadness, depression, loneliness, and grief endured by parents and caregivers after their kids leave home and begin taking care of themselves. It is a psychological condition (not a clinical condition or illness) that affects both parents.

Being a parent, it's natural to want your child to get a good education and become independent. However, what is not accounted for is how the parents feel when the child actually achieves independence and begins living their own life. The experience of when your child leaves for a boarding school or off to college can bring repressed or unaddressed emotions on the surface that may be painful.

For some parents, it is hard to accept that their child is no longer dependent on them for every small thing, be it a meal or playtime, or studies. It brings a feeling of emptiness that leads to anxiety, depression, and alcoholism if not addressed properly.

You might feel worried about your child's safety and whether they will be able to adjust to the new place. If you have only one child, you might have a hard time adjusting to the transition if your child leaves a little earlier than you expected. As the name suggests, you might have a tough time adjusting to the empty nest.

For parents, the condition is perilous and it involves feeling uncomfortable, and ungrounded for several years.

### Are some parents more susceptible than others?

Research suggests that some parents are more susceptible to empty nest syndrome than others including:

#### Helicopter Parents

This is a common occurrence in our culture and society where parents are extremely concerned about everything their child does. This leads them to hover around the child throughout their lives and when the child grows up and leaves, they are left feeling extremely empty.

#### Single Parents

Single parents share a different bond with their children as they are their sole caregivers. The parent may feel more responsible for their child and put themselves under immense pressure to raise the child. Single parents

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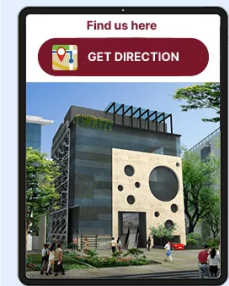
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generally have a bit more difficulty transitioning from their role as a caregiver.

#### **Stay-at-home Parents**

With many parents, especially mothers in India, adopting a stay-at-home role to care for their child, empty nest syndrome can hit them hard. With parenting becoming their full-time role, they are left feeling purposeless as their child grows up and no longer needs their full-time care or attention.

#### **Parents with Marital Issues**

"We're in it for the kid."

How often have we heard this? A lot of marriages survive or are resurrected because there is a child or children involved. But, what happens to these marriages when the child leaves to live their own life? Having to deal with an already struggling relationship with the spouse while also watching a child leave can be very difficult for the parent, making them susceptible to empty nest syndrome.

### **Causes of empty nest syndrome**



The causes of empty nest syndrome may vary among parents. Some of them include:

- Worrying about the safety and well-being of the children and how they would cope with the new environment.
- A sense of losing parental responsibility when their child leaves the home.
- Feeling of silence in the home due to immeasurable loss of joy and enthusiasm of the children.

Understanding more about empty nest syndrome will help us understand this phase of life and accept this situation more wisely.

#### **What are the symptoms of empty nest syndrome?**

Researchers have found that parents and caregivers who deal with ENS, experience an immense sense of loss which may trigger vulnerable types of behavioral symptoms as follows,

- Feeling of sadness
- Social isolation
- Anxiety/ Stress
- Loss of purpose
- Sense of insecurity
- Boredom
- Endless worry/ Guilt
- Depression

#### **Effects of Empty Nest Syndrome On Parents and Caregivers**

Empty nest syndrome is not limited to mothers both parents can experience grief and pain when a child leaves the home. However, how this grief manifests can differ based on gender. While women may feel isolated and depressed and experience social alienation, the father may turn to alcohol or other forms of substance abuse. **Empty Nest**

**Syndrome** can prompt suicidal thoughts in parents at advanced stages, hence it is essential to identify these symptoms and seek timely treatment.

### How long does empty nest syndrome last?

The duration for which a parent experiences empty nest syndrome varies based on multiple factors. It could take anywhere from 2 months for them to fully adjust to their new realities to up to two years in some cases. Factors like their financial situation, health, relationship with their spouse, and more can significantly affect the duration.

### Different stages of empty nest syndrome

There are three widely accepted stages of Empty Nest Syndrome. They include:

#### Grief

This is usually in the immediate aftermath of the child leaving the house. Parents are often left with immediate feelings of grief. Everything around the house seems to remind them of their child and they can't seem to think of anyone else. This period is quite intense and difficult, with parents even withdrawing from social interactions for a while.

#### Relief

As time passes, the cycles of grief also begin fading away. What once used to make the parents cry or feel low might no longer have the same effect on them. As they are slowly able to escape from the clutches of grief, they realize that there are things they can explore. In this stage, parents slowly begin reintegrating into the life around them.

#### Joy

This is the stage where parents have finally accepted the fact that their child has grown up and has left the home. They are now exploring the freedom that comes with an empty nest and is enjoying all the time they have for themselves. In this stage, parents usually rekindle romance with their partner, explore different social activities, and spend their time as they want.

### Dealing with Empty Nest Syndrome

Empty Nest Syndrome is nothing to be ashamed of. It is perfectly okay to express your emotions being a mother or a father. We are wired to be protective of our children so we are bereft when they leave us.

With that being said, it is necessary to move forward with the emotions and rekindle with your friends, peers, and social circle. Both partners should support each other in the process of grieving. Here are a few ways in which parents can cope healthily with Empty Nest Syndrome.

**Stay busy-** To overcome ENS, it is essential to redirect your attention towards the subjects that might make you feel engaged. Create some hobbies, perform activities, and meet up with old friends or relatives. Involvement in the physical activities like outdoor games, yoga, meditation, or jogging.

**Socialize** - Humans are social beings. We need interactions with other human beings to sustain ourselves. A great way to cope with ENS is to seek out social interactions with people of your age or those who are around you. This could involve meeting friends, making new friends, or meeting relatives as well.

**Set Tangible Goals** - Having goals that go beyond your identity as a parent is very important to help you sustain through this period of uncertainty. They will help you in the long run as well. Goals could include relationship goals, business goals, or just something that you always dreamt of!

**Keep in touch with the children-** The big benefit we have in this today's world is scientific advancement. Make regular contact through text, calls (there are more apps available to make video calls too), emails, and frequent visits. If these actions exceed, the mother might become too clingy (emotionally dependent). Ensure hold healthy guidelines within the limit that won't take the freedom and independence of the child. Hence, schedule a time frame that allows both to maintain a close relationship even when the child is away.

**Revive the romance-** Although the struggle with grief and loneliness is a big challenge, it also opens the opportunity to rekindle the romantic relationship. Spend time with each other, take each other out on dates, and take a vacation. Turn back the clock to the wooing stage of the relationship.

**Plan a vacation or trip-** One of the difficulties that empty nester endures is

their own home, after the departure of the children. The home can act as a trigger for memories associated with children that can bring on grief. Plan a vacation or a trip that can make you feel better. A change of environment, allowing yourself to explore a new place, could be a refreshing experience.

**Accept the change-** Make a journal and write down how you feel or write about what you are thankful for. This exercise will make you feel more positive and inspire a sense of gratitude.

## Benefits of an Empty Nest

Every cloud has a silver lining. While the transition during ENS can be difficult, multiple benefits accompany having your own space and identity apart from being a parent or caregiver. Studies have shown a reduction in workplace and family conflicts among empty nesters. Further, it helps parents rekindle their relationship after decades of having to split their time between themselves and their children.

## Empty Nest Depression

If the symptoms associated with ENS occur frequently and stay with you for longer, it could be a sign of Empty Nest Depression. The criteria to look out for is if the symptoms have occurred every day for the past two weeks.

## When should I seek help?

If you are experiencing ENS symptoms for longer than two weeks, consider seeking treatment from your doctor. Talk to your partner about your feeling of an “empty nest” and take timely professional support.

## Empty Nest Syndrome FAQs

### Q1: How can I prepare myself for an empty nest?

Ans: You can prepare in advance for an empty nest by structuring your days. It is good to connect with others, socialize more and work on things you have missed out on for years because of your parental role. This is the best time to rekindle lost relationships.

### Q2: What are some signs and symptoms of empty nest syndrome?

Ans: They are some common signs that can help recognize if you have an empty nest syndrome:

- You feel a loss of purpose
- You are frustrated over the lack of control
- You break into tears
- Constant anxiety about how your child will get by

### Q3: What do you do if you have empty nest syndrome?

Ans. Empty Nest Syndrome a feeling of sadness, depression, loneliness, and grief endured by the parents and caregivers after their kids leave their homes. Overcoming empty nest syndrome can be done by staying busy, keeping in touch with your children, reviving the romance, and by planning a vacation or trip.

### Q4: What age group is empty nest syndrome associated with?

Ans. The age group most associated with empty nest syndrome is between 40 - 50. At this age, children usually go on to pursue studies or careers which causes parents or individuals to feel abandoned.

### Q5: What do empty nesters do?

Ans. Empty nesters go through stages of grief, relief, and joy. In the beginning, they may withdraw from social situations. As time progresses, however, they slowly discover the joys of freedom and begin exploring the full avenues of options available to them.

### Q6: Can empty nest syndrome cause anxiety?

Ans. Empty nest syndrome can cause anxiety in parents and caregivers. It can also cause feelings of social isolation, loss of purpose, endless

worry, and guilt and in some cases it can lead to depression as well. It is also associated with increased boredom and a sense of insecurity.

### Q7: Do I have empty nest syndrome?

#### Q. Do I have empty nest syndrome?

Ans. If you are experiencing symptoms like sadness, anxiety, loss of purpose, and guilt, in the aftermath of your child leaving the house to live their own life, you may be battling Empty Nest Syndrome.

#### Why Choose Cadabams for Treatment?


When times are challenging, we think they will last forever, but eventually, they don't. Talk about this transitional period of your life with your partner and best friends. At Cadabams, we understand that this feeling of loss can take a toll on your daily life and other social relations. Our team of expert psychiatrists, psychologists, and family therapists ensures that you get all the help you need and deserve. Our solution-oriented treatment plans help ensure that your symptoms are managed properly. Our family and couples counseling therapy can help you overcome the situation healthily.

If you or anyone you know is suffering from signs of empty nest syndrome, reach out to us on our 24x7 helpline at +91 9611194949 and our clinical team will contact you.




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