

HOW TO SURVIVE EMPTY-NEST SYNDROME

1 Allow yourself time to grieve.

Sadness is a natural reaction to your child's departure. Permit yourself to cry now and again without shame.

2 Find a temporary replacement for your affection.

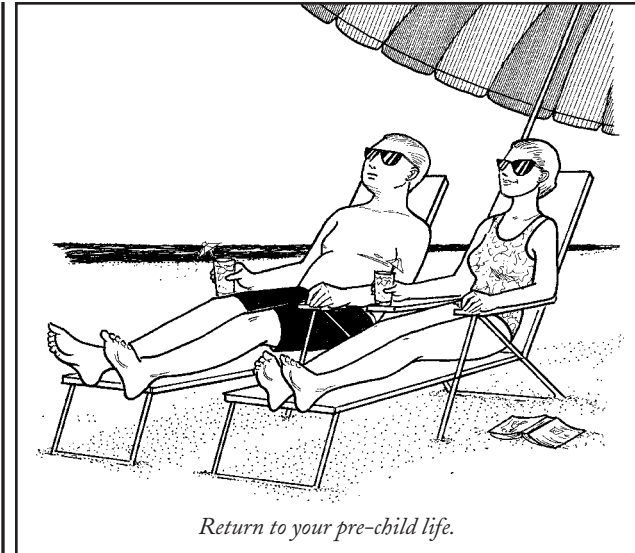
To ease the transition, get a pet, or take your child's photo to a copy center and get a life-sized replica.

3 Wean yourself.

- Rearrange furniture in your entire house, not just in your child's room. A new look can make you feel like you have entered a new stage of life.
- Remove the most recent photos of your child. Recent photos can be a reminder that he was recently in the house—replace them with older images.
- Establish a "Reminder Jar." Similar to a "Swearing Jar" into which a parent places money for every swearing infraction, this jar reinforces behavior modification and punishes "remember when" infractions.

4 Convert your child's room into your own space.

Install a Murphy or sofa bed so that your child will have a place to stay when he comes home for visits, but alter the primary function of the room permanently. Set up a home theater, exercise room, or greenhouse.



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- Read a book.
- Invite your friends over for dinner.
- Fire the maid.
- Enjoy the quiet and calm.
- Watch the television shows you want to watch.
- Find things just where you left them.
- Take a trip.

Be Aware

Keep a list of the things your child did that annoyed, frustrated, and angered you. When you start to recall these things with fondness and a smile, you will have successfully entered the next phase of your life.