

# Empty Nest Syndrome – Silly or Serious!

**Abstract:** *“From the sandbox to the senior prom, they’ve been my life”. “Now that they’re gone, there’s a huge hole in my time, in my heart, in my life. Every day, I ask myself, “What do I do now?” The serious presentation of Empty Nest Syndrome by most of the parents which needs to be corrected by medications and sensual advice or counseling so as to prevent further complications like chronic grief, depression, mental disabilities or even suicide.*

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**INTRODUCTION:** Empty Nest Syndrome refers to feelings of depression, sadness and/or grief experienced by parents and caregivers after children come of age and leave their childhood homes. This condition affects women, who are greatly attached to their children. Yet men are not immune to it. Unlike grief expressed openly over the loss of a loved one, this grief of ENS (Empty Nest Syndrome) goes unrecognized, undiagnosed and untreated because a grown child moving out either after marriage or for higher studies is seen as a normal, healthy event. Upset parents may not find much support or sympathy. Sometimes this ENS is compounded by other difficult life events like retirement or menopause or redundancy or death of a spouse or caring for elderly parents happening simultaneously.

Mothers, with motherhood as their primary role, feel at a complete loss, once the last child moves out. She may feel worthless, disoriented and unsure of what meaning her future may hold. Most mothers adapt in time but some don't.

Recent research suggests that the quality of the parent-child relationship may have important consequences for both at this time. Parents gain the greatest psychological benefit from the transition to an empty nest when they have developed and maintained good relations with their children. Extreme hostility, conflict, or detachment in parent-child relations may reduce

intergenerational support when most needed.  
**THE COMMON CONSEQUENCES MET BY PARENTS SUFFERING FROM EMPTY NEST SYNDROME**

- Change is considered stressful, rather than challenging or refreshing.
- They found moving out of home a difficult and emotional experience.
- Experiences such as weaning their babies from the breast, or sending their children off to school, were emotional and painful.
- People who rely on their roles for self-identity are more likely to feel bereft than people who have a strong sense of self-worth.
- People who are full-time parents are more often affected than people who are professionals.
- Parents who worry that their children aren't ready to take on adult responsibilities tend to experience more grief.

**THE CHALLENGES FACED BY PARENTS EXPERIENCING EMPTY NEST SYNDROME**

- Establishing a new kind of relationship with their adult children.
- Filling the void in the daily routine created by absent children.
- Lack of sympathy or understanding from others, who consider children moving out to be a normal, healthy event.

Over time, most parents adapt to their new lifestyle. Psychologists suggest that it may take between 18 months and two years to transition.

### WHAT TO DO WHEN THE HOME BECOMES AN EMPTY NEST?

Some full-time mothers (and fathers) return to work or retrain. The suggestions for them include:

- Write up a list of all those things you promised you would do 'one day' and start making those dreams a reality.
- Set achievable goals to start with, eg short courses are probably more realistic as a first step.
- Network with friends and associates to uncover employment opportunities.
- Join professional associations or hobby groups.
- Consider volunteer work to expand the network of contacts.
- Preparing for an empty nest while the children are still living with family. Make plans with the family while everyone is still under the same roof, so you don't regret lost opportunities. (Editor: *I always advice even new mothers to do something for themselves even if it is for just 1-2 hrs a day*).
- Plan family vacations, enjoy long talks, and take time off from work. And make specific plans for the extra money, time and space.
- Take time to reflect on the good job you did of raising this child to adulthood.
- Volunteer, take a class, find a new hobby or pick up an old one, join a group, keep a journal.
- Prepare and send "care packages" - food items, homemade cookies, things for the new apartment. You'll feel needed and your young person will appreciate it.
- Get support when you're feeling sad and lonely, seek advice and support from friends, family doctor or other parents.
- Take care of yourself with a healthy diet and regular exercise.
- Take a trip or get involved in a new activity together with your spouse. Rekindle the intimacy you enjoyed before you became parents.

- Spend some time updating a photo album, creating a scrapbook or crafting a collage to hang on your child's bedroom wall. Use the activity to remember happy times.
- Schedule a weekly chat with your child on the phone.
- Create a ritual to mark the significance of this transition in your family. Plant a tree or create a special garden area.

### HOW TO OVERCOME STRESS AND DEPRESSION?

- The parents experiencing ENS should monitor the reactions and their duration. If there are feelings that the useful life has ended, or if one cries excessively or is so sad that he doesn't want to see friends or go to work, should consider seeking professional help.
- Sufficient time is to be given to adapt to the changes. One should not expect too much of himself, particularly in the first few weeks or months.
- Acknowledge the grief (even if it is felt that no one else seems to understand) and allow you to feel upset for a while and then find something distracting to do.
- Discuss the thoughts, feelings and future plans with the spouse.
- Some people find that keeping a journal is helpful, while others find peace through prayer. Do whatever feels right for you.
- Put off making any big decisions - such as selling up and moving to a smaller house - until one feels that he has adapted with the situation.
- Make a trip and take your partner. Rekindle your romance by taking off somewhere, talking about the future, and making plans. Think of it as a second honeymoon that will start off the second part of your relationship. Even if you have more children at home, use this as a time to celebrate the love that started your family.

**MAKE USE OF THE SPACE:** Although you don't want to make your child feel like you're pushing them out, make plans for their room. Order

Useful Rubrics for "Empty Nest Syndrome" – Synthesis Reperto

Mind: Grief	Mind: Weeping
Mind: Grief, silent	Mind: Weeping, anxiety after
Mind: Ailments, mental shock from	Mind: Weeping, involuntary
Mind: Ailments, mortification	Mind: Sympathetic, children towards
Mind: Ailments, grief	Mind: Affectionate
Mind: Brooding	Mind: Laziness (Aversion to work)
Mind: Sadness	Mind: Mental exertion aversion to
Mind: Sadness, alone when	Mind: Mistakes in writing
Mind: Sadness, periodical	Mind: Mistakes in reading
Mind: Anxiety, children about his	Mind: Weeping, sobbing
Mind: Love, children for	Mind: Sighing
Mind: Company, desire for	Stomach: Appetite, wanting
Mind: Consolation amelioration	Sleep: Sleeplessness, anxiety from
Mind: Consolation aggravation (in few cases)	Sleep: Sleeplessness, thoughts, activity of thoughts, from

something new that will come in a couple of days after they leave. Fresh paint, some shelves or some new furnishings will bring up your spirits.

**HOMOEOPATHIC REMEDIES FOR EMPTY NEST SYNDROME**

**Aurum-metallicum:** No remedy produces more acute depression than *Aurum-met.* *Aurum* are very dutiful, take all responsibilities with utmost proficiency and this sometimes backfires on them, leading to melancholy, hopelessness and profound depression. Complaints after grief leading to self destruction, disgust of life. Hypersensitive to noise with excitement and confusion. She does everything wrong, thinks had neglected something, her friends, her duty. Feeling of forsaken by the things they have lost.

**Causticum:** The remedy has ill effects from fright, long lasting grief, worry, sorrow, and other sudden emotions. They become hopeless, ambitionless, despondent, want to die. Over-sympathetic, over-caring for her children, then children turn out ungrateful and she gets very hurt. Disturbance of sleep, wakes up with least noise, laughs and cries during sleep. Thinking of complaints aggravates them.

**Ignatia:** Persons of nervous temperament especially women of sensitive, easily excited nature, mild disposition, quick to perceive and rapid in execution. It is the chief remedies for

emotional shock, conflict, disappointment, fright and grief. Bad effects of grief and worry. Rapid change of mental and physical conditions. An emotional state of grief or frustration, silently brooding. Sighing and sobbing; inward weeping, enjoys being sad. Melancholic, sad and tearful, consolation aggravates.

**Lachesis:** Ill effects of grief. Fright, vexation, disappointment. Patient becomes greatly loquacious. Sadness in the morning, no desire to mix with the world. Insane, jealousy, suspicious.

**Lycopodium:** Ill effects of fear, fright, abuse, anger, anxiety. Patient turns timid with lack of self confidence and with poor self-esteem. Constant fear of breaking down under stress. Melancholy, afraid to be alone. Fear of public speaking, averse to undertake anything new. Weakness of memory, confused thoughts. Spells or write wrong words and syllables.

**Natrum-muriaticum:** Chronic effects of grief, disappointment, fright, anger. Depressed and introverted, dwells on past-unpleasant memories, cannot cry in front of others. Averse to consolation which aggravates, wants to be alone to cry. Fear of being rejected or hurt emotionally. Thinks she is pitied for her misfortunes and then weeps.

**Phosphoric-acid:** Ill effects of bad news, disappointment, grief, mental shock, separation from home or separation of any family members. Becomes apathetic, indifferent to everything. Settled despair, aversion to talk. Cannot collect his thoughts or find right words. Hopelessness, inclination to weep.

**Phosphorus:** Bad effects of anger, fear, grief, worry. Melancholic, disinclined to work, study, converse. Fearfulness, as if something were creeping out of every corner of the room. They want sympathy from others. Excitable, impressionable, with amiable disposition, jolly, intelligent.

**Pulsatilla:** It affects the emotions; they are moody, changeable in nature. They are mild emotional and tearful. Weep very easily and crave sympathy. Desires company, cannot be alone. They always want somebody to accompany her and will try hard to have company even though they have to put themselves out. They are great people pleasers, often become spiteful, disgusted for not being able to please others to accompany her.

**Sepia:** Bad effects of anger, vexation, grief, displeasures. They are angry, sensitive, irritable,

easily offended and miserable. Sadness over domestic affairs. Makes mistakes while writing or reading. Constantly worries, frets and cries about her real or imaginary illness. Breaks down in spells of weeping. Cries when telling her symptoms. Miserly, confused, wants to go away. Feels unfortunate without any cause. Sits quite and answers either with 'yes' or 'no'.

**Staphysagria:** Bad effects of anger, suppressed grief and humiliation. Great indignation about things done by others or by himself, grieves about the consequences. Believes that she will lose her fortune, family is going to leave her. They are easily offended.

**CONCLUSION:** More mothers work these days and therefore may feel less empty when children leave home. In India traditionally, most parents live with children happily till the last day of their life, so Empty Nest Syndrome is less common in India compared to west. Psychologist Allan Scheinberg notes "boomerang kids" want the "limited responsibility of childhood and the privileges of adulthood." The medicines described are just few important remedies which will work only with the support from real friends, family members and counselling.

## Homoeopathic Approach to Insomnia in Aged People

**Abstract:** *Insomnia is a very common problem among the elderly. There are several reasons that cause insomnia in aged people. Proper advice and counseling often can remove the cause and induce sleep. In many cases medications are needed to give a peaceful sleep to the elderly. We have several homoeopathic medicines to treat such cases successfully.*

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**INTRODUCTION:** Uninterrupted, restorative sleep contributes to our well-being and optimal functioning. Sleep patterns change over the life span. For the elderly, achieving a good quality

of night's sleep may prove to be quite a challenge. Insomnia is defined as a subjective complaint related to falling asleep, maintaining adequate sleep, or not feeling rested such that