



The Potters Bar Consortium

The build up and the loss – a parents' guide to surviving the empty nest syndrome this autumn

Thousands of parents will be hit by the empty nest syndrome this month as their children head off for universities and colleges around the country. National charity Parentline Plus is offering top tips for parents preparing for the big send off and asks 'what can parents do to prepare themselves?'

Tensions can run high in the lead up to the new term. The stressful last minute packing, the pearls of wisdom which seem to fall on deaf ears and the thought of financial strife can lead to arguments flaring up at a time when you want to enjoy your children before you lose them to a new life as a Fresher.

Parents may be anxious about their child's life skills as they prepare to live away from home for the first time and worry if they will manage their money, be able to make a decent meal and not spend all their time at the student union making the most of the cheap price of beer! Whilst at the same time parents have aspirations for their children getting a good education and a head start in life.

"Parents can start to prepare themselves for the changes ahead and the loss they will feel when their child moves out of the family home for the first time, re-discovering themselves, their relationships, and life after children". Says Lucy Edington, Acting Chief Executive of Parentline Plus. *"Just because they have moved away, it doesn't mean they don't need you, your reassurance and your support".*

The charity has put together some top tips for worried parents. Parents can log onto the charity website www.parentlineplus.org.uk, its new website for parents of teens – www.gotateenager.org.uk or call the 24-hour, free Parentline 0808 800 22 22 or e-mail parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk for further information and support.

Parentline Plus top tips for parents by parents

- Acknowledge how you feel – knowing how and why you are feeling anxious or low is a start in the right direction. You may all feel quite stressed getting ready for the move. Lots of your time may be taken up with helping your child get things ready.
- Talk about it. If arguments are flaring up near to the move time talk about how you are feeling. But remember to try not to make your child feel guilty about flying the nest as this will cause resentment
- You may feel quite a shock when they are gone – almost like grieving. Think about ways of keeping in touch if they don't live round the corner such as learn how to e-mail. Or if they have moved locally invite them over for dinner or plan a shopping trip together

- Be aware of how you are with any children who are still at home. Try not to over compensate with other children who may feel suffocated by too much attention
- Make plans for the weeks after they have moved out so you keep busy and start taking time out for yourself
- Do something for yourself. You may have more time for yourself now the washing and ironing has gone down! whether it is spending more time with friends or pursuing a dream - think about what you want
- If you have a partner you may feel you want to rediscover your relationship now the focus has gone from the kids. Think of things to do together without the children.

Lucy ends *“Don’t forget they will soon be back in the holidays, so prepare yourself for this if you have got used to having the place to yourself”*.