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Parents' Guide

EMPTY NEST

CHILDREN GOING AWAY FOR HIGHER STUDIES CAN BE STRESSFUL FOR PARENTS AND CAN LEAD TO LONELINESS. KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THE PAIN OF YOUR CHILD LEAVING HOME

HANDLING

the void

"Most couples turn to each other for support"



DR AJAY PAL SINGH
PSYCHIATRIST, MAX HEALTHCARE, DELHI

When children leave their homes the parents are left alone. This creates empty spaces and parents get sucked into the trappings of the void.

This leads to a problem of empty nest. Parenting occupies time and while parents are busy raising their children they don't have time for themselves and their interests. The experience of a child leaving home is painful but this can also be handled positively. Parents have to adjust to this change. Most couples turn to each other for support and feel more attached. Parents in absence of their child discover renewed companionship. The conventional philosophy is that once your children are settled the responsibilities are over and it is more or less the age to retire, even from the social responsibilities, but in today's time the parents are engaging themselves in hobbies and activities which they neglected previously because of the parenting duties. Women who are qualified professionals but were not working because of the parenting responsibilities can get back to work full time. Any adjustment can cause an emotional unbalance but it depends on how one responds and adjusts to this change. A minority can go into depression but the majority is able to take social support from the friends.

PHOTOGRAPH BY VIKRAM SHARMA, MODELS PRACHI GARGI, & P. VINODINI AND ANRITA DEWAN. COURTESY GIZIT AGENCY



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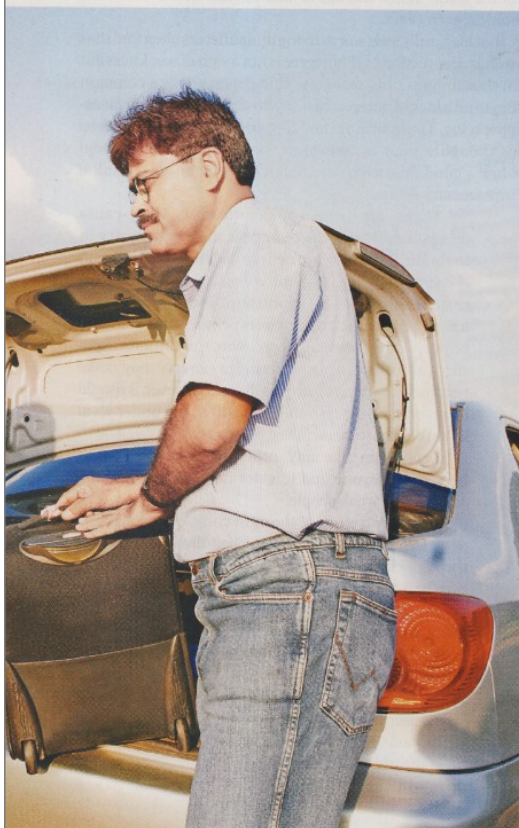
“It is important to know that the child is safe and happy”



P. C. JAIN

PRINCIPAL, SRI RAM COLLEGE OF COMMERCE, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

Parents have to overcome a few concerns when it comes to their children going away for higher studies. One concern is whether their son or daughter is enrolled in a college and a course of their choice? Once the child is admitted to a suitable college and course, one of the major problems is solved. Another problem arises with the residence. Parents are very concerned about where their son or daughter will stay? Every parent prefers that the child stays in a college hostel, so that he/she stays close to the college. In the process, all commuting problems would be solved. Another worry is the need for a safe and comfortable place with a proper facility for food. Within the college premises there is hardly any problem regarding the security as the hostel gates close at 7 pm and open in the morning at 6.30 am. When parents are aware of these timings they know that their children are safe. The college has to balance the parent's expectations and the children's needs. The students come to study in colleges from far away places and it very important for the parents to know that their children are comfortable, safe and happy. Gradually, when they see that their child is settled in the college and the academic performance substantiates their happy quotient, they are content and assured of the child's well-being.



“Take up a hobby and get more socially active”



ARTI ANAND

CONSULTANT PSYCHOLOGIST,
GANGA RAM HOSPITAL, DELHI

This is a very common phenomenon. With more children going away for higher studies, parents are worried about how their children will live outside. Mostly, this happens with housewives or mothers whose lives revolve around their children. Once the child leaves the house the mother gets affected the most as there is a sudden void in her life, so what happens is that she keeps worrying about her child all the time. Questions like is my child having proper meals, is someone troubling him/her, how is s/he going to adapt to a new environment, arise in her mind. Some parents get too lonely and start suffering from depression. Parents are advised to find comfort in each other and to get more socially active. They should start meeting old friends often and, if possible, make new friends. Travelling is another good option. Take out time for the two of you and go on a vacation which was on the back of your head for so many years but couldn't be materialised because of parenting responsibilities. The thumb rule to overcome the loneliness is to occupy yourself in the hobbies and activities that interest you. Parents should shed the blues as their child is away for higher studies and will return in 3-4 years time.

As told to Stuti Kanoria