

---

---

# The Beacon

## *Guiding You Through the Process of Change*

Published by Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC  
40 Dale Road, Suite 201 Avon, CT 06001  
© 2009, Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC

Volume 9, Issue 4

September-October 2009

---

### **Helping Parents Cope with the Empty Nest Syndrome**

Empty nest syndrome is a general feeling of loneliness that parents or guardians feel when one or more of their children leave home. While more common in women, it can happen to both sexes. Parents who have strong maternal or paternal bonds between themselves and their children can make the feelings worse. The role of the parents while their children are still at home is participating in their daily life. When the child is not at home, the distance means that time together is lessened.

For many parents, their entire sense of identity has been based on being a parent or caregiver. When children leave home, parents can feel lost. Parents at this time also may be experiencing other life changes, such as menopause, "midlife-crisis" issues personally or professionally or managing increasingly dependent elderly parents. Weekends seem too quiet and there is no one to chauffeur or nag about schoolwork. Parents also may feel unfamiliar with the amount of "together time" with which they now are presented because there are no children to distract them as a couple.

The empty nest period is a time of change. Some parents take to it relatively easily, rediscovering themselves as individuals and as a couple. Other parents have more difficulty with this period because they feel

that their usefulness has diminished and that a part of their life has ended. Depressive symptoms, such as increased crying, social withdrawal, decreased motivation, and energy, sleep and appetite changes can emerge. If these symptoms persist, evaluation by a qualified mental health professional may be helpful. Such a professional can help parents better understand and cope with their feelings and put a child's departure into perspective.

Therapy at this junction can encompass a variety of modalities. Individual therapy can provide support, allow a private place to mourn the change and loss of identity, and provide a springboard for the development of a plan for the next phase of life. Couples' therapy can help parents reconnect with each other and rekindle intimacy. Support groups can connect parents with others going through similar life transitions and validate their feelings and experiences.

The empty nest period is a time of growth for children and rediscovery for parents. It is a challenging time for all parents. Nothing will ever be the same again. But just because everything is different does not mean it cannot be as good or better.

#### **Reference books:**

[Setting Boundaries with your Adult Children](#) by Allison Bottke

[Barbara and Susan's Guide to the Empty Nest: Discovering New Purpose, Passion, and your Next](#)

Great Adventure by Barbara Rainey and Susan Yates

The Parental Experience in Midlife by Carol D. Ryff

Empty Nesting: Reinventing your Marriage When the Kids Leave Home by David H. Arp and Susan L. Blumberg

By Naomi Neuwirth, LCSW  
**Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC**  
**(860) 676-9350 x44**

The Second Half of Marriage: Facing the Eight Challenges of the Empty Nest Years by David Arp

*Beacon Behavioral Services*  
**Guiding You Through the Process of Change**

**Clinical Services**

- Evaluations
- Individual, Couples and Family Therapies
- Support Groups
- Psychiatric Services

**Divorce Services**

- P.E.A.C.E. Program for parents with high conflict
- Custody Evaluations
- Support Groups
- Parent Education and Consultation

**Organizational Consultation and Training**

- Executive Coaching
- Conflict Resolution
- Violence Prevention
- Stress Management Training
- Customer Service Training

*Beacon Behavioral Services, LLC*  
1-888-422-8801

**Avon**  
40 Dale Road  
Avon, CT 06001  
860-676-9350

**Bloomfield**  
34 Jerome Avenue  
Bloomfield, CT 06002  
860-243-5024

**Glastonbury**  
200 Oak Street  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
860-659-4370

**Visit us on the Internet at:**

[www.beaconbehavioral.com](http://www.beaconbehavioral.com)  
[email@beaconbehavioral.com](mailto:email@beaconbehavioral.com)

***Beacon Behavioral Services,***  
*LLC*  
40 Dale Road, Suite 201  
Avon, CT 06001