

# BOOMERS & BEYOND

## Coping with an empty nest

Many people find it rewarding to start a family and raise children. Watching kids grow through the years and sharing in their experiences can bring life to a household.

Mothers spend 18 years or more devoted to their children, and often their identities are defined as "Mom" above all else. As a result, it can be difficult to think ahead to life without kids in the home, especially when children are toddlers or school-aged. But children will someday grow up and move out, and the emotions that resonate when that day comes can be overwhelming.

Many parents feel a sense of sadness and loss when their last child leaves the family home. Referred to as "empty nest syndrome," these feelings are not officially labeled as a clinical mental health issue, but they are very real for many people. While parents encourage their children to become independent and branch out in their own lives, not every parent can cope with

an empty nest. The parenting and family resource Verywell Family states that mothers with empty nest syndrome experience a deep void in their lives that oftentimes makes them feel a little lost.

Moms who are feeling the pangs of sadness due to an empty nest can employ some strategies to alleviate these feelings.

- Keep friends close. Use this opportunity to spend more time with close friends and put yourself first. Schedule all of those activities you may have temporarily put on hold while caring for children through the years.
- Make time for travel. New experiences can broaden anyone's horizons. Travel as a couple or with a group of friends. Put the focus on fun and then share the experiences later on with your adult children.
- Redefine yourself. The experts at Psychology Today suggest finding new roles and interests to explore, or spend more time exploring existing hobbies. For example, if you've thought about



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doing community theater, do so now that you have some free time. Or maybe you've always had a goal of going back to school? Now may be the time to make that happen.

- Reconnect with your partner. Recall the years before you had children when it was only the two of you and devote time to making more memories as a couple. Plan date nights, go to sporting events, attend a summer concert, or pursue other shared interests.

- Change things up at home. Turn children's rooms into spaces you can use for your own interests. One can be a crafting room or a home office. Another may be a home theater. No longer labeling those rooms as the kids' spaces can help the transition.

Empty nest syndrome is real, but there are many ways to move past the mixed emotions synonymous with this phenomenon.

## How to prepare your family when an aging loved one is moving in

No man or woman, regardless of his or her age, wants to consider that a day may come when they need to rely on loved ones to help them perform everyday activities. But every day tens of millions of people serve as unpaid caregivers for their aging friends or family members.

A 2015 survey from the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP found that approximately 34.2 million people had provided unpaid care to an adult age 50 or older in the last 12 months. Many unpaid caregivers are pulling double duty, caring for their aging parents while also raising families of their own.

While there's no guarantee that aging men and women will require care, caregivers figure to become more necessary as life expectancies increase. In fact, recent years have seen the senior population in the United States exceed 50 million for the first time in the country's history, and figures from the U.S. Census Bureau suggest that figure will continue to rise until 2029.

Men and women who are preparing to welcome an aging loved one into their homes may wonder how to make that transition go

smoothly, especially if they have young children at home. The following are some tips that can help families prepare to welcome an aging friend or family member into their homes.

- Speak with your loved one's physicians. Speak with an aging loved one's physicians so you can get a complete picture of their physical and mental condition. This can give you an accurate depiction of how much care your loved one needs now and how much they might need in the future if their condition worsens.
- Discuss forthcoming changes as a family. Once you gain a full understanding of your loved one's physical and mental condition and before this person moves into your home, discuss it with your family. Adding a new member to your household will affect everyone, so each member of the family, including young



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children, should be included when discussing how the family dynamic will change. Parents must recognize that even young children may be asked to make sacrifices to accommodate aging loved ones. Explain these sacrifices in advance and how important it is to make an aging loved one feel welcome when they move in.

- Discuss conditions with children. Children may recognize their grandparents or elderly loved ones have physical limitations, but they likely won't understand conditions such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Parents can ask a physician about how to explain cognitive decline to young children. Children may not recognize cognitive decline as readily as adults, so parents may need to discuss these conditions with their children periodically and/or if the conditions worsen.

Millions of people across the globe welcome aging loved ones into their homes when they can no longer care for themselves. Such caregiving changes family dynamics, and these changes should be discussed before and after a loved one moves in.

## Boomer & Senior News Line

By Matilda Charles

### Help in Deciding Where to Retire

If you plan to move when you retire, where will you go? What is important to you, and how will you decide? U.S. News & World Report, working with Aetna, has released a report about the healthiest communities in the country. While all of the 81 characteristics they compared aren't about health, they do affect quality of life.

Their ranking calculated the scores on 3,000 counties across the country, broken down into 10 categories: population health, equity, education, economy, housing, food and nutrition, environment, public safety, community vitality and infrastructure.

To see the rankings, go online to [www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/rankings](http://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/rankings). Scroll down the page and you'll see the list of the top 500 counties and how they ranked in each of the categories.

On the first page, however, you can specify the county name or ZIP code of an area you're interested in. After

you click, you'll see the rankings for your selected area, with individual category scores, as well as a state and U.S. average. Scroll down for the details of each one. You'll find everything from the smoking rate to voter participation, the poverty rate, changes in housing values, crime rates -- information on all 81 metrics. Be sure to click or mouseover everything because there's more to it than appears.

At the very bottom of the page you'll find sliders for each of the 10 categories where you can shop for your ideal retirement location. Customize your preferences by moving the sliders, and a list of your best communities will appear on the right of the screen.

Even if you're not ready to decide about a move right now, this report will get you thinking about what's important to you about where you live. All in all, this report is very well done and comprehensive in the amount of information it provides.

TURNING 65 AND NEED HELP WITH YOUR MEDICARE CHOICES?



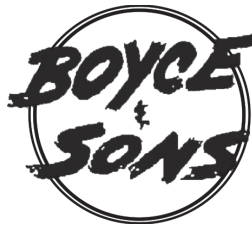
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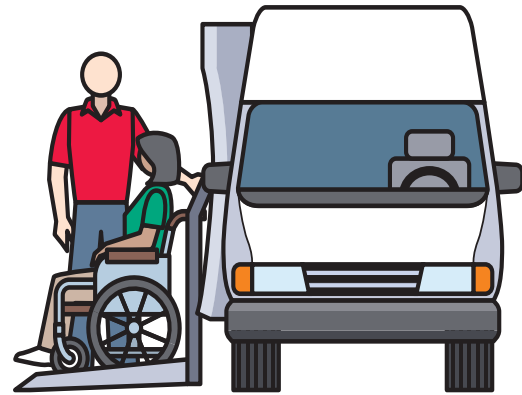
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