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Home Design Tips for Empty Nesters

Hazel Bennett · Friday, October 30th, 2020

Parents deserve to feel proud of a job well done when their kids are ready to leave the house. Instead, many experience Empty Nest Syndrome, a feeling of grief, loneliness, or aimlessness now that children have grown and flown. These emotions often transfer to the home, making dealing with bare rooms or getting rid of the clutter kids leave behind feel even more difficult.

But, an empty nest can also signal a new chapter in your life and home. As the parent of grown children, you've likely let your kids' needs define your decorating decisions for years. With more open space and no fear of messes and damage, you finally have the freedom to design how you like. With a few tips in hand, it's easy to begin the process of reclaiming your space.

What Is Empty Nest Syndrome?

Empty Nest Syndrome is not a medical diagnosis, but it describes a hard transition out of the caregiver role. Not only does an empty nester miss interaction with her kids, but she can also go through a kind of existential crisis. Having defined herself with labels like soccer mom, single mom, or stay-at-home mom, a woman can feel like she has lost touch with who she is once the kids leave.

While feelings of loss can affect any parent, research shows [Empty Nest Syndrome impacts women more than men](#). Mothers often place greater value in their identities as caregivers and are more likely to put careers and education on hold for their kids. As a result, women with an empty house can feel purposeless and lost.

How Can Interior Design Improve Your Outlook?

One way for empty nesters to resolve their feelings about this chapter of life and embrace the next is to modify their environment. Advances in neuroscience connect living spaces with our state of well-being, suggesting that [good design can brighten your mood](#). If your current surroundings don't fit your new situation, try rethinking your home decor.

Decorating Ideas for Empty Nesters

1. Revamp Large Spaces

The bigger rooms in your home tell the story of your kids. You might have a large banquette where your teens' friends piled in for pizza or a sofa worn from years of roughhousing and pillow forts.

While they're full of good memories, many of your previous furniture and layout choices may not make sense now.

One or two adults use a room differently than kids do. Consider redesigning spaces like the kitchen and living room for your needs. Swap your giant dining table for a compact, round bistro set to encourage conversation. Dedicate some counter space to a home coffee bar, add a wine cabinet, or trade the sectional for a smaller sofa to cuddle with your partner.

2. Reorganize and Declutter

Reorganizing is a good first step toward [cleaning up what's left behind](#). Begin by gathering items and sorting them into baskets and trays. When you're ready, separate the keepsakes from things that aren't worth saving. Storing old toys or purging closets of outgrown clothes can be hard, but you'll have more usable space and a clean slate where you can start anew.

3. Take on a Renovation

With kids in the house, there never seems to be enough time to renovate. Now that your days are your own, why not tackle the home improvement projects you've been putting off? Transform your space to meet your needs, or think ahead to future downsizing by focusing on resale value. To this end, kitchens and bathrooms are the best places to spend money.

4. Reclaim the Backyard

When playsets and clubhouses no longer dominate the backyard, there's plenty of room for a soothing outdoor retreat. Create a patio seating area or an outdoor kitchen for entertaining, or add a comfy swing to the porch to enjoy the fresh air and chat with neighbors. Making space to connect with friends and soak up some sun helps empty nesters brighten their outlook.

5. Free Yourself from Practicality

It's finally time to indulge in the luxurious fabrics, plush textures, and chic colors you couldn't risk with kids around. For example, white sofas and rugs are hard to protect from sticky fingers and muddy shoes, but they're perfect for an empty nester. Take some time to explore elegant options you may have passed up in favor of sensible, stain-hiding furniture.

What to Do with Childhood Bedrooms: Spare Room Ideas

When you're finally ready to turn your child's bedroom into something new, many options might suit your lifestyle. If big renovations aren't in your budget, a repurposed kid's room is an inexpensive way to give your home some new personality with just a few pieces of furniture and decor.

1. Age It Up into a Guest Room

If your kids or family often stay several days when they visit, a guest suite is a natural choice. To transition from child to adult decor, go for more grown-up, neutral colors, sophisticated patterns, and inviting textures. If possible, repurpose or refinish existing furniture so you can save money to splurge on cozy linens, a bigger bed, or a bench for luggage.

2. Make Space for Hobbies

From a craft room to a writer's haven, hobby rooms are a smart spare room idea. Not only are they a luxury you probably couldn't make space for previously, but they're an excellent way to get back in touch with your interests. Rediscover your love of literature with a cozy reading chair and lamp, or create a dedicated space for music with instrument stands and acoustic wall panels.

3. Prioritize Self-Care

After years of putting the kids first, empty nesters must relearn to take care of their own physical and spiritual needs. Remove all of the furniture from the space and bring in exercise equipment, mats, and a large mirror to check your form. Whether a yoga studio, meditation room, or home gym is your idea of relaxation, a space devoted to wellness will help you enjoy the positive aspects of having more me-time.

Taking on Empty Nest Syndrome with Home Decor

Just as a bare bedroom seems to reflect your loneliness, a comfy space for connecting with friends and pursuing your passions can make you feel full of life. As empty nesters adjust to having adult children, redesigning the house to fit a new, kid-free lifestyle can help them embrace and enjoy this new, exciting stage.

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