

Reconnecting with Your Authentic, Wild Self Once the Kids Have Moved Out

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There is a void that can create feelings of loneliness and sadness when your kids move out of the house. But revisiting the passions and interests you've had no time for can be incredibly fulfilling. When my kids went off to college, I found that of course I missed them, but I missed myself more. For two decades there'd been a steady routine of food prep, carpool, scheduling activities, and managing many details- but it was all based around other people's needs and chosen activities. While I don't regret any of it, I also recognize that having time to focus on my own desires was quite liberating.

Of course, there can be an initial shock and heartache when the kids move out, and it's good to give yourself time to experience and honor your feelings. But wallowing in sadness isn't healthy and doesn't set a good example for the kids. In fact, your children want to see you happy, and by building a life based on your passions you are mirroring perseverance, the ability to stay strong, and the importance of following your heart. You've earned your authentic "me time," and will probably find yourself relishing this important life transition.

When faced with an empty nest, here are 8 ways to reconnect with your authentic self:

1. Schedule a fun adventure.

Having something to look forward to is a wonderful gift to give yourself as you shift into a new stage of life. This could be a day trip to a neighboring town, your dream vacation, or you might even surprise yourself and head off on a wild adventure. Stay open and let your heart guide the way. I went on an African safari and ran with the wolves!

2. Set and conquer new goals.

What dreams did you set aside while your focus was on the kids? Have

you always wanted to learn French? Or take a class on a topic of interest? I surprised myself by diving into horticultural studies, animal communication and collecting wildlife bones. Take a look at organizations like MeetUp, which can introduce you to groups doing things you may never have thought of, right in your own neighborhood.

3. Play like a kid.

Making time to play and create just for the sheer pleasure of it is a healthy way to nourish and learn about your authentic self. Get out some colored pens, crayons or paints. See what wants to come forth through your art. Wear two different shoes. Anything that makes you feel light-hearted and playful is good for you, because it will help you revive your genuine nature, which may have been set aside for the sake of the kids and adulting.

4. Get out into nature.

Spending time in nature is healing, because it opens us up and connects us to something universal that is greater than our daily routines. By tuning into nature's cycles, seasons and rhythms, it can help you move through your transition. Likewise, by enjoying the quiet stillness in nature, you can find our authentic inner voice. Listen and observe. Let the nature—inside and outside of you—guide you along new paths, leading you to greater fulfillment.

5. Reconnect with friends.

When our children's schedules occupy most of the day, our own friendships can take a back seat. I am finding that my old friendships are flourishing now that I have more time and space to foster them. When the kids leave home, it's the perfect time to reach out and catch up with those treasured friends from the past.

6. Move your body.

Getting physical exercise will help boost endorphins and other feel-good chemicals, while being in shape will give you a confidence boost. Try new forms of exercise, because every time you get out of your comfort

zone you're expanding your body, mind and potentials.

7. Connect with the community and volunteer.

Giving back to your community through local charities can be a very rewarding experience. What causes have you always been drawn to? Perhaps you have special gifts and talents to share, or an idea for how to creatively assist your favorite cause or assuage a collective problem? Now is a wonderful time to join in and help make a difference.

8. Get a furry friend.

I was surprised to find a cat enter my life as I stepped into my empty nest era. I already had a dog and bringing a cat into the mix seemed crazy. But I learned so much from her feline ways. Perhaps a new pet will offer you companionship, comfort and wisdom too.

These are just some ideas of how to reconnect with your authentic, wild self when the kids move out. There are many ways to fill the empty spaces when our children go off to make their own way in the world. Honor yourself with repose and reflection. When you are rested, step into the mystery of a new phase in life. This is a potent time! Listen to your inner voice. Be creative, bold, child-like, spontaneous and free!! Reconnect with your authentic self and all those things you set aside in order to raise a family. By devoting time to yourself, you can realize many new adventures and joys.