

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Should Empty Nesters Refeather the Nest?

By Peggy Spear



Many empty nesters like to transform bedrooms into home offices.

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Like a giant slingshot, I am getting ready to launch my youngest child into the world. Actually, I'm just getting ready to send him off to college next month, but the fact remains: After raising three children, my husband and I will be "empty nesters."

The idea of an empty nest is scary: it sounds lonely, neglected and desolate, all legitimate feelings that experts I've talked to and read about say I'll feel after 25 years of focusing

on children.

"Kids take up a lot of space in our lives," says Christine Roslund, a Lafayette-based therapist and life coach who specializes in empty nesters like I'll be. "You have to find something to fill that space."

The emotional aspects of facing an empty nest is a story for another time, but one of the first things empty nesters think about is the practical side of shrinking the household:

how will it affect their home?

The answer, I've found, is not that much.

Like many empty nesters, I had dreams of perhaps moving to a charming Berkeley bungalow, or a turnkey townhouse somewhere this side of the tunnel. Or finally moving my office out of the guest room or dusting off the weight set and making my son's room a home gym.

The problem is, my son might come home. My daughter did, after graduating from college, as do many young adults from Lamorinda. The fact is, the empty nest doesn't stay too empty these days.

"It was just a sensible move," says Orinda's Beth Sanguinetti, whose two daughters went to UC Berkeley. "When they graduated, neither had a job, so my husband and I said they should move home and save what money they could."

Today's economy is playing a huge role in the changing design of the "empty nest." It's very expensive to live in the Bay Area, especially for young kids just starting in the workforce. But it's not just a Bay Area phenomenon. According to a recent Pew Research Center Report, the country is now experiencing "the largest increase in the number of Americans living in multi-generational households in modern history."

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