

When the Kids Come Home from College: Seven Keys to Peace and Harmony in the Nest

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Eventually, you stopped despising the eerie silence in the nest and began looking forward to peaceful moments of quiet. In your nest, you have come to enjoy simple pleasures like reading a book with no interruption or getting a good night's sleep.

Oh, how drastically things change when the kids come home for a holiday break or summer vacation. Though you have missed your little cherubs, their return has caused the nest to topple.

How do parents and young adults effectively readjust to living in the nest together?

1. Family Forum

Immediately, check with all family members to determine the first available date and time to have a family forum. The family forum is an avenue that allows each family member to express openly any concerns or wishes. A parent should start by saying something like, "As a family, it is important that we communicate and enjoy our time together. Let's come up with guidelines that will help us be considerate of one another and reach our goal." At this initial meeting, all family members decide on a reasonable compromise concerning things like chores, accountability to other family members, rules regarding guests in the home, toning down noise levels when others are asleep, curfews, individual expectations, etc.

Jay R., a college student at NC State University says, "I think the guidelines should be agreed upon so that both parties (parents and young adults) feel and know they are represented."

2. Point of View

Once basic guidelines are decided, the next key to harmony in the nest is that each family member tries to see things from the other person's point of view. Parents need to lighten up a little and young adults need to be responsible: thinking before acting.

3. Open Ears and Heart

Similarly, it is essential that parents and young adults determine to listen to each other. Parents are sometimes guilty of not listening. Ginger B., mother of college age children says, "Seeking to hear and NOT to be heard is sometimes all it takes to defuse a volatile conversation; to truly hear what our children are saying and to feel what they feel." Young adults must remember as well, your parents were once your age and they have gained valuable experience that may be helpful to you.

4. Present not Past

A particularly paramount key is that parents stop seeing their children as little children but as maturing young adults. Yes, fond memories of pre-school aged Johnny with the missing tooth are nostalgic and heartwarming. Just remember, Johnny is a college student now and there is no way to turn back the hands of time. Recognizing your college age student as a "young adult" means allowing him or her to make decisions and holding the young adult accountable for those decisions.

5. Hard Work

In addition, it is necessary that everyone in the family realize there are no free rides in life. It is essential that each person earn spending money during school breaks; whether babysitting, working at the local grocery store or some other means.

6. **Family Fun**

To balance a hard working family, another key that is just as important is being sure to have fun together. My family and I enjoy playing interactive games on the Wii. (bowling, tennis, boxing, etc.)

7. **Brief Time**

The last key to peace and harmony is that parents and young adults must realize their time together in the nest is brief. Be thankful for each other and make the best of moments you share.

If your children have returned home from college and there is chaos in the nest, remember the Seven Keys to Peace and Harmony. Have a family forum to come up with guidelines for a reasonable compromise. Try to see things from the other person's point of view. Listen with your heart. Parents, please do not live in the past; recognize your child has become a young adult. Remember there are no free rides; everybody needs to work. After the hard work, be sure to have fun together as a family. Finally, realize life in the nest together is brief, so make the best of it. Before you know it, your college student will have earned a degree and begun working in his or her career field. In essence, children become adults and build nests of their own.