

## **4 Dangers that Can Doom Empty Nesters to Divorce**

### **Timely trend for back-to school**

As kids leave for college this month, how can couples keep their marriage from being part of the soaring divorce statistics for empty-nesters, which have risen from 1 in 10 to just 1 in 4 over the last few years?

### **Segment Proposal:**

#### **4 Dangers that Can Doom Empty Nesters to Divorce**

**Or**

#### **4 Things to Do Now to Avoid a breakup when Your Kids Leave for College**

### **Segment Elements:**

- Interview with local couple whose last child is leaving home (Interview questions below)
- Marriage Expert gives 3 reasons divorce risk high for empty nesters:
  - Loss of sense of purpose, source of joy
  - Tremendous grief even though it's normal
  - Problems have been brushed under the rug

But, marriage really can get terrific when your time and energy are freed up from kids. Here's how:

- 4 Dangers/Things to Do Now:
  1. **Don't talk about your relationship.** When you say, "We need to talk." That means, "I want to complain about you." Instead of talking about your relationship, think long and hard about what you want and express it as a desire, as in "I'd love to go dancing," not, "You never take me dancing."
  2. **You're not having enough fun!** Start thinking about how you want to fill that time and energy void. Maybe you've always wanted to paint, or play volleyball, or act.
  3. **Stop buying your husband's underwear.** You were the kids' mom--not your husband's mom. You don't need to make his doctor's appointments. Make a list of things you do for him that he could do for himself and STOP.
  4. **For the love of God, don't go to marriage counseling.** According to a UCLA study by the professors of psychology, 75% of couples who received traditional behavioral marriage counseling were separated a year later. But if you change yourself, your partner will respond to you differently and then you'll feel like you have a new partner.

### **Segment Details:**

#### **Interview local couple with kids leaving for school**

Potential Questions for couple:

What happened when your kids were all out of the house. Did that put a strain on your relationship?

Did you think about splitting up as soon as all the kids were out?

Were you staying married partly for the kids?

Was it harder to relate to each other after the kids were gone?

Was there a getting to know you process again once it was just the two of you?

How did you start to come together again after your kids were on their own?

**Potential shots for story:**

*(Shot of kids with back-packs on a college campus)*

Every fall, thousands of kids leave home for college.

*(Shot of wedding photo from the 1980s)*

But does that traditional rite of passage threaten the stability of their parents' marriage?

*(shot of local empty-nest couple at home, cooking together or playing with the dog.)*

The divorce rate among empty nesters has soared from 1-in-10 to 1-in-4 over the last few years According to studies, including one from the University of Louisville at Kentucky.

*(shot of couple with interviewer)*

One local couple's empty nest took a toll on their 23-year marriage.

**Why Does an Empty Nest Have to do with Divorce? 3 things:**

- When kids leave the nest, they take with them a sense of purpose, joy and a source of excitement. It can be like losing a job you love.
- Even though it's a normal part of raising a family, an empty nest creates enormous grief and a sense of loss for parents--almost like a death, which puts enormous strain on the relationship. And it's human nature to blame your partner when you feel bad.
- Sometimes parents are put the struggling marriage aside until the kids move out, and that's when you see a lot of cracks in the relationship suddenly appear. Things have been swept under the rug for the benefit of launching those kids into the world with a home court advantage of parents who are married.

But kids leaving can also be the beginning of a really wonderful chapter of your marriage, because of the additional time and freedom. Here are the things you want to avoid, and how to make your empty nest back into a love nest:

1. **#1 Common Danger: Talking about your relationship.** No couple ever got happier by having State of the Union addresses. It's tempting, because we think that's how we're going to get the connection we're really wanting, but really when you say "we need to talk about our relationship" it's the same as saying, "I'm got a list of complaints about you."

Instead, think of what the desire is behind your complaint and focus on saying

what you want as an outcome. Maybe it would be, I'd love to go dancing." That's completely different from saying, "You never take me dancing," or "we never do anything fun." So you're going to get a completely different response.

*Action: Figure out what you want instead of what you don't want and you say that honestly without criticism.*

2. **#2 Common Danger: Not Having Enough Fun.** This is vital for every happy marriage, but when there's a vacancy, and a loss, but it's vital to make yourself happy. Ask yourself what would make you happy? Think about your **MDR - Minimum Drama Requirement.** Performing as an actor or musician, or getting more active in your sport or dancing, or giving talks for example. We've all heard that marriage is hard work, but if you make yourself happy first, then things you might have fought about become things you laugh about.

*Action: Do something just for the fun of it. This doesn't need to include your spouse, by the way. It could be a solo hobby. The only thing you really need in common are each other.*

3. **#3 Common Danger: Mom's who Manage Their Husband's life.** Managing your kids' lives was a full-time job you're used to doing, and if you started buying your husband's underwear or scheduling his doctor's appointments, as part of your job, you're going to want to resign from mothering him. He's not one of the kids and he never was. Managing your husband is not going to nurture the connection and passion you want in your marriage. He's a grown man and *men are not sexually attracted to their mothers.* But if that's your training for a number of years, to be the mom, it can be a hard habit to break.

*Action: Ask yourself what you're doing for him that he could be doing for himself and resign from those jobs.*

4. **#4 Common Danger: Couples' Therapy:** According to a UCLA study by the professors of psychology, 75% of couples who received traditional behavioral marriage counseling were separated a year later. And with a 50% divorce rate, it's not hard to see that this old style of treating marital problems is just not working for most people.

Fortunately there are more effective, modern ways to revitalize a relationship, including the tips we've been discussing. The only person you can change is yourself, and when you do, your spouse will respond to you differently and you'll see them change as well.

**Action:** If you want professional help with your relationship, consider seeking

out a relationship coach to help you change your part of how you're interacting.

**Alternate Promotional Tags:**

- **Empty Nesters: Doomed for Divorce?**
- **When your kids leave will your empty nest be a love nest or will you call it quits?**
- **Are empty nesters doomed to divorce? 4 Ways to beat the threat of a break-up when kids leave for college**
- **Does an empty nest mean divorce?**
- **4 Ways to Prepare Your *Marriage* for an Empty Nest**
- **Will your empty nest lead to divorce this back-to-school season?**
- **Can empty nesters keep their marriage together?**
- **With kids going to college what's next for empty nesters: Is it divorce?**
- **Empty-nest divorce danger: How to stay together when the kids leave for school**