



Amy Syd Babcock

It's been 3 years now since my youngest went off to college and I'm still adjusting to the empty next. I mean – the empty nest. Interesting slip of the tongue. Very interesting!

I love being a mom, and I loved raising my kids. Although a parent's job is never really over, there comes a time when you have to step back and let go. Lately whenever I try to give my kids advice or ask questions they get annoyed with me. They want and need to figure things out on their own and I realize that the greatest gift I can give them is to have faith that they can do that.

But where does that leave me? Terrified, feeling alone in no man's land. So, I finally asked myself – "What's next? What am I going to do with the rest of my life?"

If you have a satisfying career, perhaps it's easy for you to answer that question. But for most of us, even those of us who have satisfying careers, when the kids leave the house they leave a very big hole in our lives. How do we begin to fill it?

If you find yourself going through this, here are a few tips I hope you'll find helpful:

1. It's perfectly okay to take some time to figure things out. Don't expect the answers to jump up and bite you in the face (although it could). You've entered a new phase of your life and it may take some time to build up some momentum. Remember when you first became a teenager? Remember when you started college? Remember your early twenties when you started your first job or when you were dating and wondering where Mr. Right was? Chances are you had to feel your way into each of those phases and figure things out with a little trial and error.
2. Enjoy doing nothing for a while. That's right. Sometimes it takes a little bit of nothing to make something. You deserve to take a break. Put some questions out there and let your subconscious (or God or the universe, whatever your belief) work on rearranging things for you. Besides, how often do you give yourself time to do nothing? What a luxury!
3. As you relax, keep your eyes and ears open. Look for opportunities. Watch for clues. Life will begin to nudge you in a new direction. You may need to stick your toe in a few different waters until you find the one that feels right, so don't feel you need to jump into anything right away. If you have a strong impulse to do something, follow it! It might be the best path for you.
4. There may be more than one path. Don't assume there's only one right path for you. There may be several. You may find that you want to keep that part-time job, finally take a yoga class, volunteer at the local senior center, or join Toastmasters and start an online business. Keep your options open and allow things to change as you change.

**B**en Franklin said, "When we're finished changing, we're finished." I read in a recent AARP magazine article that what keeps our brains sharp as we get older is continuing to challenge ourselves and our view of the world.

So, how do we challenge ourselves? Stepping out of our comfort zone is one way. Try new things. It could be as simple as trying a new recipe, joining a gym, or starting a garden. For me what worked was deciding to start an internet business. I borrowed books from the library and educated myself, which of course is an ongoing process. I conceived an idea and launched a website. I'm still learning about Google and how to market on the web. There's so much to learn and I like the challenge of seeing if I can earn any money and still offer people something that will make their lives better. It's something I take pride in and something I can grow.



How about you? Have you found something to get excited about? Make up your mind to find that special something and you will. Your kids are grown. Your relationship with them is changing. Your relationship with your spouse is changing. But most important, your relationship with yourself is changing. It's time to meet yourself again and start a friendship that will last a lifetime.

## ***About the author***



Amy Syd Babcock is a mom, music teacher, and singer-songwriter. She has two grown children, a 22 year old son in college and a 24 year old daughter who is now living on her own. Amy empathizes with all parents adjusting to the empty nest. Amy's newest endeavor is the creation of a website for parents that offers simple solutions to complex problems. Her songs and albums can be found at iTunes, Napster and other music sites under the artist name, Amy Syd.  
<http://www.instantparentingrelief.com/>

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