



▲ **GROWING** Moving on is worry for all

NO NEED FOR EMPTY NEST UPSET

TEENAGE sons and daughters will soon set off for college and university.

It's a natural part of growing up that youngsters leave home and start their adult lives – either by going to college or university, or moving in with friends. But what of the parents left behind? While some rejoice at their new-found freedom, it seems many more may, often secretly, struggle with the loss of their day-to-day parenting role.

"Feeling very upset and unsettled, as I did, is extremely common," says author Celia Dodd, who's researched the topic for her new book, *The Empty Nest: How To Survive And Stay Close To Your Adult Child*.

"Yet it's almost as though a taboo exists and talking about how much you miss your kids seems to be on a par with discussing hot flushes."

Here are her tips for surviving an empty nest:

| The days leading up to departure can be stressful because there's so much to sort out. Remember that your child may be nervous too:

| Quick, practical demonstrations of how to heat a pizza, boil an egg or use a washing machine are invaluable.

| Don't add to the tension with last-minute lectures, which are unlikely to be heeded, about healthy eating, sex and alcohol.

| When you first arrive at the hall of residence, resist the temptation to suggest exploring the campus or local area together.

| Staying nearby for a few hours or even overnight, in case they need you, is an option. But be prepared not to be needed. Leave your child to it if they're settling in.

| Face up to your feelings and recognise you may be sad for a while. Doing undemanding things you enjoy and spending time with people who genuinely empathise can help.

| Keep an open mind about how often your child will ring you or want to come home. If they're busy and don't have time to call frequently or visit, it almost certainly means that they're involved in student life and that you've raised a confident, independent young adult. Take it as a compliment not a slight.

| Don't be alarmed if he/she doesn't settle in the first few months. The first term can be difficult. Regular phone calls or a short visit may be all it takes to beat homesickness. Send cards and treats as a morale boost.

| **The Empty Nest: How To Survive And Stay Close To Your Adult Child** by Celia Dodd is published by Piatkus, priced £12.99. Available now.