

READING GUIDE for *Navigating the Empty Nest: re-creating relationships*

I have enjoyed creating this reading guide for you to share with your friends/loved ones/reading group. I hope you enjoy exploring *Navigating the Empty Nest: re-creating relationships* together while also sharing some of your 'empty nest' journey with each other.

Happy reading and with my blessings for your time together - Robyn

The first two questions are based on the workshop I wrote about in Chapter 20.

1. Read the transcript in Chapter 1 of the segment taken from the Sunrise program noticing what words and phrases have energy for you and any other thoughts that come to mind. Create a piece of free writing around whatever is coming up for you. If you have difficulty starting, just move your pen by writing words such as blah, blah, blah or any other word that comes to mind. When you have finished, read it out aloud to yourself. What feelings does this evoke? Write them down.
2. Read the notes in Chapter 1 headed "Five quick tips for navigating the empty nest". For each of the five points do some free writing (or drawing) about whatever comes to mind as you consider how they relate to your own experience around emptying your nest.
3. As we empty our nest it is normal to experience strong feelings and at times feel 'all at sea'. List other major transitions you have experienced in your life. How do they compare with this one? What practices/support assisted you before? Could you draw on them now?
4. I am suggesting that men feel the impact of the empty nest as much if not more than women. Do you agree? What are some of the reasons I give for this? Can you think of others?
5. In the 1970s a woman's grief at this stage of emptying the nest was pathologised as the 'empty nest syndrome', yet grief is a normal response to the passing of what for many parents is a significant stage in family life. How do the people around you, including your family members express their grief? Are you comfortable expressing grief to your loved ones?
6. Parents need to gradually let go of their 'hands on role' as parents as they re-create their relationships with their young adult children. What have you learnt about yourself while doing this? How does your experience now compare with the one you had with your own parents when you left the nest when young?
7. My research indicated that as parents grieve the passing of their 'hands on' parenting role, they start to look forward to having time for their own pursuits and for self-nurturing. What have you/will you do for yourself now?

8. It is vital for parents to be self-aware so they connect in a more adult to adult way with their young adult children. Have you created new personal boundaries and are you able to assert yourself with them?
9. There are many other concepts explored in the book such as projection, meaningful simplicity, challenging self-limiting thoughts. Consider each of you in the group choosing one of these concepts and give a five minute presentation to the group drawing on a personal example from this 'empty nest stage' of family life to explain the concept.
10. I am suggesting that our own experience when young when leaving the family nest will be triggered and any wounds from back then need to be healed if they are not to contaminate the re-creation of a more adult-to-adult relationship. Complete the exercise on Page 64 to reflect on your own experience of leaving the family nest.
11. I'm also suggesting that as parents it is important to acknowledge that young adults are moving out in to a very different world and many are making very different choices to when we were young. Do you acknowledge this?
12. I have found keeping a journal an invaluable support while emptying my nest. In fact it was probably my journal writing that encouraged me to write the book. Have you kept a journal during this time? Would you consider sharing an entry with the group?

Now that you have completed the reading guide together I encourage each of you to commit to bringing in to your life 3 things over the next 6 months (whether they are daily practices, shifts in attitudes etc). Write them down on a piece of paper, read them out to each other, (this step is voluntary) collect them in a box and put them away somewhere safe, and make a date to meet in 6 months time to review how well you have gone in honouring your intentions.

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