

U.S. Edition

THE BLOG

# When Your Youngest Leaves For College... In A Year

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School's starting this week and I'm already stressed out. Not because I can't remember if I bought enough school supplies, or filled out all the emergency contact forms, but because my youngest will be entering his senior year of high school.

I've thought about this moment from the time my boys could speak, even though it felt far away at the time. Everyone's heard how quickly it happens, but none of us really understand that in our hearts. And it hit me today when Facebook decided to show me a picture from seven years ago when my boys were little and adorable and dependent. When my older son left for college, I cried on and off for two weeks. I cried when I realized I didn't have anyone to remind to pick up his empty soda cans, I cried when I couldn't tell him he forgot to clean up the dog poop, and I cried when there was no one explaining to me why Superman and Batman couldn't be in the same room together. Or something like that, he knows so much about superheroes and I understand so little. Finally, I stopped crying because I knew my younger son still needed me. I miss my older son all the time, but I feel happy that he is thriving in his independence and building towers out of his soda cans somewhere else.

When your kids are young, friends with adult children look upon you with envy and tell you to enjoy every minute of your child's youth. We all try, but let's be honest, do we really enjoy every bug play where our kid is the singing mosquito? Or the millionth Halloween parade where in the tenth of a second your kid passes by, you notice the mask from the costume you paid fifty dollars for has already broken, even though Halloween is still two days away. I have to admit I can't wait until I no longer have to go to open house and listen to a teacher drone on about what my kid would be doing that year in AP Calculus, when I couldn't remember basic algebra anymore.

But no matter how much you try to soak in every moment with your kid, time slips away, and suddenly they're seniors in high school. Even though we want to be with our kids as often as possible, they don't want us around all the time. They want to be in their room with their doors closed playing on the computer or Facebook or Snap Chat or some other thing that wasn't their homework.

I have a whole year to enjoy my youngest son, but I know it'll be taken up by applying for colleges and getting ready for graduation, and before I can blink, I will be walking out of his dorm room and leaving him behind. And then what will happen to me? What will I do when I don't have to cook tacos for the fourth time in one week? What will I do when he doesn't show me funny pug videos or explain to me how Pokemon Go analyzes high traffic areas of cellular data to place that Pikachu? Will I still be a Mom, or just one on holidays and in the summer? What will my life look like without someone to nag? I guess I could nag my husband, but then he'd want to leave for college, too.

I'm trying to remind myself that for this loss there's a gain. I'll be proud that both my boys are now independent men. They'll be taking care of themselves, living their lives and still bringing their laundry home on holidays. I will cherish that laundry. And since they'll be on their own, I'll be able to read more, exercise more and travel whenever I want to. I'll even be able to finish writing my novel. But knowing I won't be able to drop by my youngest son's room for a quick hug will be the hardest part. He'll be away exploring his new world and I'll be left here envying my friends with younger kids.

