



Ask Task: Baby bird is flying! or not! Parents worry



Parents worry about the emptiness of the nest. COURTESY MAURICE SCHALKER ON UNSPLASH

By **ALLISON TASK**

For Montclair Local



NEST

Allison Task is a career and life coach in Montclair, and the author of "Personal (R)evolution: How to Be Happy, Change Your Life, and Do That Thing You Always Wanted to Do." Her website is allisontask.com. Need advice? Send questions to allison@allisontask.com, or to us at culture@montclairlocal.news.

Dear Allison,

My eldest daughter is graduating this year. I know that I am going to be a mess, as this is so emotional. How do I get through graduation without the tears? I don't want to be a snotty mess with makeup running down my face all month.

— Messy Mommy

Dear Messy,

There are a couple of questions here: 1. What do I do with the emotions I feel? 2. How do I avoid showing the emotions I feel? and 3. How can I not be a "snotty mess". Let's start at the top.

You're feeling the feels right now. How delicious, and how alive you are! Your child has reached a milestone, as have you. What are the feelings that you have? That's a real question — can you take 20 minutes and talk them into a recorder or write them out? Describe them, name them, and most importantly, feel them.

The emotions are going to come, so you can either welcome them or they can burst forth without welcome. What would happen if you invite them out? How would this change your situation?

As for showing the emotions, I'm going to wager that most of your peers are feeling the feels too. There's a whole handkerchief/tissue industry devoted to emotional moments. If the feelings are going to come, how can you manage the flow in a way that feels good, even dare I say beautiful? An embroidered handkerchief? A pocket pack of Kleenex — and some extras for your friends?

When (not if) the feelings come, can you invite them out in a way that's as beautiful as the feeling itself?

Dear Allison,

My son graduated from college two years ago. He's still living at home. He went to a good school, has an OK job but just doesn't seem motivated to move out and get on with his life. How can I get him to take more responsibility for his life?

— *Looking to Launch*

Dear Looking,

It appears that you're interested in having your son move out of your house, and he is less interested. Is that fair?

Moving out of your parents' house post-college is not something that all cultures require. In fact, many cultures invite children to live at home until they are ready to marry and start their own family. Except these days, traditional partnering and taking on adult responsibilities have been delayed by about five to 10 years from earlier generations for a variety of reasons. It's not an unusual situation (doesn't ease the frustration, I know, but know you're not alone).

Let's identify some middle steps toward his launch. Does he pay rent for his accommodations? Does he get access to complimentary meals, car, insurance, phone?

If he lived on his own, presumably he'd pay rent, procure food, figure out his transportation, etc. Many parents charge rent when their child lives at home, and when the child is ready to find their own place, the rent comes back as a "gift" to help with first and last month's rent and security deposit. If he gets "free" board, can he be responsible for grocery shopping or cooking for those who share the home?

What are the ways that you can help him build life skills so that he'll be better prepared to go out on his own?

Dear Allison,

Making summer plans for my two kids is a nightmare. It's expensive, they're switching camps every week and I feel like everyone else has a better plan than we do. I get so frustrated planning the summer. It takes all the fun out of it.

— *Mad in May*

Dear Mad,

I hear your frustrations. First, I'd like to try to help you manage your frustrations in the present, and second, we can plan for a better future.

Let's start with the expense of it. What's your budget? And for how many more years will you need to take on this expense? At some point, your children can transition from a cost center to a profit (theirs, not yours). I chose 13 as the last year we would pay for camp; after that it was time for my child to find work or volunteer. Figure out how much you are comfortable spending, and then make the investment.

As for the weekly switching, that is a lot to manage, though I know that's how lots of people choose to do summer. Do the kids enjoy the variety? If you're doing it to accommodate your kids' joy, is there a way to soak in their joy? If it's too painful for you no matter how happy your kids are, then it's not worth it. Full stop.

I know that some folks split the summer into two chunks: kid fun and family fun, often divvied into July and August. July might be time for camps, and August might be time for the family to take off on an RV trip or some sort of family getaway. Or, send the kids on an adventure: are there grandparents, aunts/uncles or close friends who might want a visit? Is sleep-away camp an option (some offer scholarships/need-based pricing)? How can you have a summer that you enjoy, and be less of a project manager for everyone else?

The key question here is: If you could design a great summer, starting with yourself, what would that look like? If everyone else's plans seem better - what are they? What are you jealous of and how could you add it into your plan for next summer? How can you flip the script and make summer a delight instead of a nightmare? Take some time with that and think it through. If you can imagine it, you can build it.