

Health & Fitness

FEATURES

THE BUZZ

NEWS & NONSENSE

Compiled by

Tamara Ikenberg



Tired of watching national "Stars"?

Dance fever

Did the new season of "Dancing With the Stars" inspire you to test your toes on the dance floor?

If so, you're in luck. We are in the middle of National Ballroom Dance Week, which kicked off last Friday and runs through Sunday. Why ballroom dancing gets 10 days while fathers, mothers and dead presidents get only a single day is not something the Buzz feels qualified to answer.

But we can tell you that Thursday at 6:30 p.m., USA Dance of Greater Louisville will be strutting its stuff at Sacred Heart Academy, 3175 Lexington Road. So stop watching famous people fling themselves around and check out local athletes with a real passion for the art.

St. James soiree

The St. James Court Art Show isn't until Oct. 2, but you can preview and purchase award-winning artwork in advance from 50 selected artists during the eighth annual St. James Preview Party.

The cocktail buffet, catered by Silver Spoon, is a fundraiser for CASA — Court Appointed Special Advocates. It will be from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Oct. 1 at The Henry Clay, 300 W. Chestnut St.

The \$100 cost includes appetizers, buffet and drinks. For reservations, call (502) 595-4911 or visit www.casajc.org.

Also, raffle tickets for a 2010 Mercedes-Benz GLK 350 SUV

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The kids are gone: What now?

If you've been feeling sad or out of sorts since you went off to college recently, don't be too hard on yourself.

Everyone from stay-at-home moms to car dads can feel that way, said Robin Gurwitch for the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

"It's very normal for parents to feel sadness, a little blue," said Gurwitch, a licensed clinical psychologist who's also a marriage and family therapist.

Though sometimes referred to as "empty nest syndrome," such feelings aren't limited to when a child leaves the home, she says.

They may arise with the departure of a grandchild or even a pet. But a little planning and staying connected with your child can be the middle child of your life. But a little planning and staying connected with your child can be the middle child of your life. But a little planning and staying connected with your child can be the middle child of your life.

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HOW TO COPE WHEN YOUR NEST IS EMPTY

- ▶ Find a way to keep yourself occupied, such as volunteering, pursuing a hobby or relishing a bubble bath.
- ▶ Devote time to other relationships. Renew old friendships. Make new friends. Invite a buddy to lunch if you're having a hard time or just want to catch up.
- ▶ Work on your marriage or relationship. Schedule date nights with your spouse or partner. Talk with him or her about interests and priorities. Find ways to have fun together and to support each other's individual endeavors.

▶ Establish a routine for keeping in touch with your child, such as setting a regular day and time to connect or sending occasional e-mails.

▶ Don't hover too much. Encourage your child to solve his or her own problems when possible. For example, instead of you asking a professor about an academic issue, encourage your child to contact the professor.

▶ Seek professional guidance if you or your child has trouble adjusting for an extended period. Be on the lookout for signs of depression. Seeing a therapist, clergy member or primary-care physician may help.

▶ Talk to your child about money and other issues related to responsibility and safety. Come to an understanding about who is paying for expenses, such as tuition, books, clothing, travel and phone service.

▶ Read all correspondence from the school and know the school's rules and policies.

▶ If there's a visiting day for parents, go.

▶ Be aware that problems, such as binge drinking, can start in the first few weeks of school.

Sources: Robin Gurwitsch, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center; Eli Karam, University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work; Ronald Werner-Wilson, University of Kentucky; Dr. Margo Benjamin, New York-Presbyterian Hospital and Weill Cornell Medical College; Dr. Karen Soren, New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Resources

- ▶ American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy: www.aamft.org
- ▶ Eli Karam: www.elikaram.com
- ▶ Health and Safety for College Students: www.cdc.gov/Features/CollegeHealth

NEST | Kids are gone

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"Have the child be part of that (planning)," Gurwitsch said. "It may be that the mother says, 'OK, I hear you; I won't call you every day. But let's come up with a compromise that we talk on Sunday, or that I'll text you, but you have to actually text me back.'"

In addition to having a talk with their son or daughter, it's important for couples to discuss how much time they want to spend together, what kinds of things they'd like to do together, and how to support each other's individual endeavors when children are no longer in the house, said Eli Karam, an assistant professor in the marriage and family therapy program at the University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work.

Gurwitsch encourages parents to consider taking up hobbies that they always wanted to do but didn't have time for when their children were younger, whether it's painting, learning a second language or spending time at a gym.

Sending children off to college also gives parents — whether single or married — a chance to renew old friendships and make new friends, she said. And couples might want to work on their marriages.

"Sometimes couples will find that, when the children leave, they're left talking to someone that they don't know," Gurwitsch said.

Ronald Werner-Wilson, chairman of the University of Kentucky's family studies department, said couples should consider going out on dates again.

"Find some things to do together to reacquire yourself with each other," he advised. They should "look at it as an opportunity to get to know their spouse again, to invest in their romantic, intimate relationship that has probably been neglected a little bit because of the parenting responsibilities."



Photo

Karam, a licensed marriage and family therapist, said he helps couples and families navigate through this period, and he stressed the importance of "ongoing dialogue."

Sending a child off to college is something that should be "celebrated rather than lamented," he said, but it's also important for partners to be able to disclose that they're feeling down. "Couples should be able to come to each other and talk about, 'You know, I really miss junior.'"

Karam recommends that parents maintain some contact with their college student while he or she is away, whether it's by having a weekly chat, going to campus for parents' weekends or welcoming the child back home for a weekend visit.

Technological advancements have made it perhaps easier than ever to stay in touch. In the past, families often depended on costly long-distance phone calls, but now there's "Skype and text messaging and unlimited cell minutes and all kinds of other technology," Gurwitsch noted.

Though it's good to take advantage of that technology, parents shouldn't be texting their children "every five minutes," she said.

If you're a mom who finds yourself wanting to contact your child too often, call your girlfriend instead, she said. "Have that backup

support for you. Talk to other women that have gone through the same thing or may be going through it right now."

There's a "feeling-out period" the first couple of months that a child is away, but after that, generally, "the parent can kind of back off a little," Karam said. But that's a boundary that has to be negotiated between the parent and child.

Consider asking your child, "How often do you want me to contact you?" and if you're feeling any doubt, ask, "Is it too much? Is it not enough?" said Werner-Wilson, who is director of UK's marriage and family therapy program. Also, when you call, say, "Is this a good time?"

If you're feeling blue or having a particularly hard time, it can be helpful to talk to a clergy member, therapist or friend, Werner-Wilson said.

"My first recommendation would be ask a friend out (to talk), and if that doesn't seem to be helping, or if they don't have the motivation to ask a friend, then I think it's certainly appropriate to consult with a professional" to help you "kind of work through this transition," he said.

And be on the lookout for signs of depression, Gurwitsch said. Perhaps you're weeping more

often than not, feeling hopeless, not wanting to go out with friends, having trouble functioning at work or in relationships, having difficulty sleeping, or noticing a change in appetite (such as eating too much or too little).

Any of those can "red flags that maybe you need to talk to your physician or certainly a men health professional," s said.

Reporter Darla Carter can be reached at (502) 582-7068.

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