

Saying Goodbye to Our Childhood Homes

By Marci Brockmann

The house where I grew up was always home even though I haven't lived there in more than two decades.

It was my home. I grew up there.

I skinned my knees on the sidewalk, played tag with my friends in the yard, argued with my siblings in the upstairs hallway, punished and

loved by my parents everywhere within its walls. This home saw it all—the laughter, the sickness, the tears, the joy and the fear of punishment when I tried to silently sneak in after curfew.

This was the center of my world, the sun in the solar system of my young life.

Saying goodbye would never be easy. Even if it was time.

Our childhood homes can often be the touchstone in our turbulent lives, tethering us to memories of our childhoods, our amazing siblings, our deceased relatives and beloved parents. They house our shared memories of big family gatherings around Thanksgiving turkeys, BBQs and swimming pools.

Despite moving on in life and establishing grown up households of our own with spouses and children, the presence of the homes in which we grew up are symbols of the continuity and history of our lives. Our parents live there and are surrounded by the accumulated memorabilia of many decades of raising family and hosting gatherings.

When these houses get sold, after aging parents want to move on to an easier lifestyle or a more protected one, after one may have passed away and memories become a burden to the survivor, it is a time of mixed emotion for everyone involved.

The excitement of starting anew and beginning a fresh chapter is usually a bright one. But with it comes the clearing out and reliving of old memories, which can create waves of mixed up emotions.



My own childhood home was sold after my parent's divorce and each of my parents moved in with their new spouses.

I was away at college, but I felt homeless.

The tether to my childhood home and to all I had known of my nuclear family had disintegrated into nothingness.

I was adrift.

I had no place to call mine. No place where I always felt welcome and comfortable. No safe place to go when life got too overwhelming. My room—where I written endlessly in journals, whispered adolescent secrets, cried endless rivers of tears and stolen private kisses with my high school boyfriend—was gone.

I knew I would always be welcome in my new stepparents homes, but it wasn't the same. So, I did what I had to and moved on. I had no choice.

I closed that chapter of my life and memories in a box and worked hard to create a new, safe place in my own home, which now serves as the childhood touchstone for my own children to call theirs.

A childhood friend of mine faced this dilemma today with the sale of his parent's home—the home in which he and his brothers grew up, in which they became men. They brought their wives and their own children to grandma and grandpa's house and always had the security of knowing that their safe place was there for them if they needed escape and quiet.

As he was cleaning out the house with his father, brothers and their wives, he was reliving many of the bittersweet memories of a shared lifetime of love and family. He repeatedly got swept up in it all and had to set himself to task again, boxing up and cleaning out so that a new family could begin to make their family's future memories within these walls.

On closing day, as he shut the front door of his house for the last time, he looked up toward heaven and spoke his wish to his mother: "I wish nothing but a long and fulfilling life to the new residents and hope they can refill it with the love that has been here for so many years. I'm sure my brothers echo my feeling and then some."

Our homes can hold a special place in our hearts and minds. Never underestimate the power of place in our lives. Let's be grateful for the blessings of safety, sanctuary, family and love.

May they forever warm our bodies and hearts.