

Is it still moving forward if you're actually moving back...home? An essay on moving home after graduating college, the good and bad, the why and how.

By Sophia Carroll



My childhood home. Photo by: Google Maps

At 11:02 p.m. last Friday, my phone lit up with a text from a childhood friend, Mary.

“Can’t wait to be home and figure it all out together,” it read.

Mary and I hadn’t talked in months, too busy with life I suppose. I realized in a tired, burnt-out, half-drunk haze that I had no real idea where she planned to live after graduating from college. So I called her and we talked about how we’d both be moving home after graduation, with no tangible plan or knowledge of when we’d be moving back out again.

After our call she sent me that text and followed up with, “We have so much ahead of us.” So I responded, “We’re gonna be great. I’m so excited.” But as I sent that message, in the back of my mind I knew that I wasn’t completely convinced that what I’d written was true.

Growing up in a small town, with a graduating class of 189 students, I knew from a very early age that I wanted to get out into the “real” world as soon as I could.

And I did. Or at least I thought I did.

I began my college career at American University in August of 2021. I moved away, further than most of my friends did, to a school in one of the greatest cities in the country (in my opinion), Washington D.C.

Mary's aware, as most of my hometown friends are, that I've always had fairly high expectations for myself and my life. She knows that moving back home, at any point, after graduating high school was not a part of my plan.

For high achieving students, and there are many at my school, moving home can feel like failure. This innate need to live independently and on your own in the immediate stages of young adulthood has been ingrained in American culture. The praised ideal of individualism stems early on in American lives and is displayed so clearly in the ways we discuss the idea of living with your parents after graduation.

"The stigma of moving back in with family as an adult feels so uniquely American," said journalist, Fiza Pirani, in an [essay](#) for Romper magazine. But this is not the case for plenty of other cultures around the world.

Pirani explains that in certain cultures, such as her own Indo-Pak Muslim culture, it is much more uncommon for unmarried children (especially unmarried women) to leave their family home than it is for them to stay.

In American culture however, it seems that by returning to your childhood home after you've finished school means you've failed somehow. The jokes about being "25 and still living in your parents basement" run rampant. I've heard them all, and honestly, I've told them too.

But in today's world, with the rising costs of living and a truly frightening job market, moving home to a supportive household, which I'm so privileged to have, doesn't seem like the end of the world. As much as American society might make me believe it is.

In my dream world, upon graduation I'd have a secure job offer that provides me with financial stability and independence and the ability to live in a city like D.C. or New York.

However life, of course, is not so simple.

"The cost of living has significantly risen since Gen X was young adults; however, minimum wage has not increased with it," said journalist Nay Hernandez in an [article](#) for student newspaper, The Lumberjack.

According to the [Payscale](#) Cost of Living Calculator, the cost of living in D.C. is 39% higher than the national average. While in [New York](#), it's 130% higher.

According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), median annual wage for news analysts, reporters, and journalists was \$57,500 in May 2023. Living in one of these cities, as a full time journalist is doable, but extremely tough. Especially for an entry level journalist, which, if all goes well, I would become.

Beginning a new career, *alone*, in a city where everything is over 100% more expensive than the rest of the country seems almost impossible. So if taking a little time to move back home and begin the next phase of my life in a place that's filled with love and support makes me a failure, I guess I'm okay with that.

Sources

Nay Hernandez

[linkedin.com/in/nay-hernandez-829126321](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nay-hernandez-829126321)

Fiza Pirani

<https://www.fizapirani.net/about>

[PayScale](#) (D.C.)

[PayScale](#) (N.Y.)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)