

A Parent's Guide to Maintaining Healthy Boundaries with Your Adult Children

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After your kids grow up, you remain a parent, but your job description changes. Your adult children can make their own decisions, and you're both free to determine how you want to interact with each other. **Setting boundaries will help you to maintain a healthy relationship.**

There may be many issues to sort out. For some parents, it's a matter of encouraging healthy independence in their children. For others, there may be conflicts caused by feeling neglected or disrespected.

Use your emotional boundaries to clarify your priorities and let others know how you want to be treated. Try these tips for parenting your adult children.

Guiding Your Adult Children Toward Independence

The coronavirus has increased the already high numbers of adult children living with their parents. Boundaries that distinguish between helping and enabling may prepare your kids to move out sooner or make it easier to live under the same roof.

Try these techniques to encourage independence in your grown-up kids:

- 1. Listen closely.** Provide your children with a sounding board rather than trying to fix their troubles for them. **They'll learn more by coming up with their own solutions.**
- 2. Expect contributions.** Depending on the circumstances, you might ask your child to pay rent or cover additional expenses such as food and utilities. It's also reasonable to share household chores.

3. **Make investments.** Attach some conditions to your financial support if you think your child needs more guidance. You might pay for certain expenses, such as tuition or the deposit on an apartment.
4. **Set goals.** Work with your child to develop a plan for them to become self-supporting. Discuss the consequences for failing to stay on track.
5. **Consult your partner.** Ensure that your spouse or other relevant family members are on board. You're more likely to succeed if you present a united front.

Dealing with Disrespect

Do you feel like your adult children are rude or hostile towards you? Resolving conflicts promptly may help you to avoid more serious estrangements.

Try these tips:

1. **Hold yourself accountable.** Your child may need to vent about your past performance as a parent. **You can treat yourself with compassion while being open to what they have to say.**
2. **Be flexible.** What if your child wants some time apart? Let them know that you're willing to work on your differences and eager to welcome them back when they're ready to talk.
3. **Set limits.** At the same time, you may need to decide what conduct you consider intolerable. If the situation is more than you can handle on your own, find a support group or a therapist who specializes in family dynamics.

Other Issues in Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children:

1. **Address special needs.** There may be valid reasons why your child needs your support long after they turn 21. That may include mental and physical health conditions, as well as financial setbacks. **Focus on what works for your family** instead of feeling constrained by traditions.
2. **Stay in touch.** What if you just want to see more of your children? Long distances and busy schedules can make that difficult. Suggest fun opportunities to get together without applying undue pressure. Take advantage of video calls and other technology.
3. **Allow your children to raise their kids their way.** Defer to their rules and avoid overstepping unless there's an urgent health and safety concern.
4. **Pursue your goals. Remember that there's more to you than being a parent.** Create a balanced life where you can take care of your other responsibilities and fulfill your personal dreams.

Enjoy sharing your love and wisdom with your adult children and be open to learning from them too. Respecting each other's boundaries will help you to draw closer together.