



Enriching Lives

PARENTING YOUR COLLEGE STUDENT

When children are young, we teach them to tie their shoe laces, drive and to do their own laundry. Parents devote a great deal of time and energy in teaching their children how to become independent and productive young adults. As our children begin their journey in adulthood, questions burgeon during this transition that requires parental soul searching. Parents wonder whether their adult child can handle the academic demands of college. Can she or he stay on top of the workload? Does she or he have enough self-discipline to manage the social whirlwind? Parents acquire a keen awareness of the thousands of minute skills needed for daily living; from remembering to set the alarm in the morning, to meeting crucial deadlines. What will happen once they are on their own?

The future is unknown. However, developing adult relationships with your grown children is a critical skill in this stage. The following suggestions are offered below:

Establish areas of accountability and appropriate boundaries. Boundary setting encourages healthy emotional detachment that provides your adult child the freedom to venture on their own, take healthy risks, learn from their mistakes and develop healthy identities. At the same time, this provides parents with the opportunity to reclaim their own lives by rekindling one's marriage and personal interests.

If you are providing financial support to your adult child, discuss and clearly outline the guidelines that your adult child should follow to continue receiving that support. Financial assistance comes with a price for all - with potential conflict around issues of co-dependency, control and unsolicited advice. When you create a contract, the result is less conflict.

Once you have done all you can to prepare your adult child to embark on their own, let go of your resistance and act. Fostering independence in your adult child will facilitate an emotionally meaningful relationship between you. As we watch our children develop into a well-adjusted adult, we feel confident, joyful, and excited in the widening of our adult children's horizons. Launching them is an opportunity for all of you. Tap into your own passions and begin to imagine the adventures that lie ahead.

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