



Raising Adult Children

Raising Adult Children

Parents often complain about the difficulties of raising teens and tweens.

Maybe it's because two of my three kids are already in college. Maybe it's because at every parent workshop I teach someone asks me what to do with their 19-year-old... their 21-year-old living in their basement. Maybe it's because these young people think they know everything.

But I think raising adult children can be more difficult than raising teenagers.

Parents often complain about the difficulties of raising teens and tweens. I'm not going to argue, those can be trying times. But wait until your kids graduate high school! The situation only gets increasingly problematic and delicate.



When they were 13-years-old it's clear who is in charge. Sure, many 13-year-olds think they're capable of running their own lives, but if by chance they try to take the Buick on a joy ride to New York City for the weekend, the cops will bring them back and tell them, "You better start listening to Mom and Dad!"

But when they're 18-years-old parents have lost all authority. The primary connection is now the relationship, with a little bit of influence if you are providing them with room, board or tuition. But even then, at any moment they could tell you, "Enough!"... join the army and start making decisions completely on their own.

So how is it that a caring parent can continue a nurturing, constructive relationship with their adult child?

With two kids in college, and several hard lessons learned, I've already learned a few lessons along the way.



Three Tips for Parenting Adult Children:

1. Relationship First

Good parenting requires two vital ingredients: bonding and boundaries.

Bonding is the relationship between you and your child. When they were young this was holding them, and playing with them. As they got older, nurturing began taking a different form, like listening and encouraging, hopefully with a little bit of tickling or wrestling still thrown in the mix.

But good parents also provides boundaries. Parents are not just “friends.” We’ve all seen that “friend-parent” who allows their kid to do anything (cough... Billy Ray Cyrus... cough cough), and it doesn’t work. In addition to the nurturing that comes with bonding, kids also need structure, and discipline. Even as I lay out these two ingredients, many of us will start thinking introspectively, “Did I provide enough nurturing? Was I too heavy or light with discipline?”

Once our kids hit 18, whether we like it or not, the relationship becomes one with high bonding, and low boundaries. Parents who actually try to continue reigning control over their kids lives will quickly discover it to be an effort in futility. I’ve seen dad’s try that one. “You will not date him!”

Ha! How does that usually turn out?

Your boundaries don’t have teeth any more, so focus on the relationship. Parents often feel their kids slipping away so they claw and scratch trying to maintain control. These actions only push their kids away.

Invest in the relationship. Take them to coffee and practice the art of listening. If they are facing a crisis or at an impasse, don’t tell them the answer... in fact...

Jonathan McKee is the author of over a dozen books and the brains behind TheSource4Parents.com



| downloadvouthministry.com

Three Tips for Parenting Adult Children:

2. Reinforce Their Independence

Ask them, “So what do you think you should do?”

The more you release control and become a good listener, the more they’ll come to you for advice. People pay psychologists big money. Why? To sit there for an hour, ask a few questions and give a couple minutes of advice. Try doing the same.

When they tell you about their new tattoo or their decision to drop Organic Chemistry, ask them, “So how do you feel about that decision?”

Don’t condescend or criticize them. And if they ask you your opinion, give it graciously, concluding with, “but that’s a choice you’re going to have to make for yourself.”

3. Begin When They’re an Early Teen

Raising adults doesn’t begin on their eighteenth birthday. We need to be raising decision-makers throughout their teen years. Start strict, but as our teens get older give them more and more chances to experience making important choices. Talk with them about the choices and ask them what they’ve learned. Allow them to experience the pain of a bad choice. It’s better they make some of those choices while still in the home rather than 3,000 miles away in a college dorm.

Don’t wait until they’re out of the house to experience decision making.

Parents who practice good listening and treat their kids like adults will find their kids coming to them again and again for encouragement... and occasional coaching.

Jonathan McKee is the author of over a dozen books and the brains behind TheSource4Parents.com



| downloadvouthministry.com