

Parenting Twenty-Something Children While They Find Their Way

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Most parents have trouble communicating with their twenty-something children. It is a difficult stage of life, a transitional time when adult children ignore their parent's advice or view them as clueless. Many times the adult children will become unappreciative and hostile, pushing the parent/child relationship into a downward spiral.

Martha Pope Gorris, author of *Parenting Twenty-Something Kids* says, "There are a lot of things we are doing that need fixing. I think what happens with a lot of us is that we get comfortable with an instructional mode of parenting. When our kids get into their twenties we are still giving advice, still instructing, still guiding. And that is not what our children need. It is important to accept that fact."

When Pope's two daughters reached adulthood, she looked for proactive information about how to better communicate with them. She found there was very little available to help families with this transitional stage in both a child's and a parent's life. Through her research, she wrote an inspirational guide for parents, suggesting powerful tips for developing healthier relationships with 20-something kids.

First, Gorris says, "Recognize the new challenge associated with parenting twenty-something children. It's difficult, but rewarding." Sometimes it helps mom and dad to look back to when they were in their twenties. They will remember it was a time of independent growth, of not wanting or needing a parent's advice. This realization helps with the transition from parenting methods used for young children to a whole new set of rules for young adults.

All parents want their children to become independent, able to take care of themselves and become successful adults. In order for this to happen, parents have to stop trying to control them. Control only leads to a defensive attitude in children, pushing them further away. Ask yourself: Will these words or this action promote a healthier relationship with my child? Then act accordingly.

Expectations are another form of control. Parents expect certain things from their adult children; after all, they raised them with particular goals in mind. For many young adults, the expectations of parents are totally different from the ones they see for themselves. Parents need to let go and accept the choices of their child, and stop giving advice and listen.

Listening is extremely important at this stage. Listen to the goals your children have for themselves. Listen seriously; make eye contact, giving them your undivided attention. Become a friend they can confide in, rather than a controlling authority figure. Respect what they have to say; support their decisions in the same way you would respect one of your friends or colleagues.

Share your own experiences with your adult children. Tell them stories from your past, allowing them to choose if they want to follow your example or not. Your stories can teach them valuable lessons, making you more like a friend than an authoritarian figure. This new parenting technique will be more effective when dealing with adult children. They will come to view you as an equal, and a loving friend they can trust.

The most important thing is to show your children love without strings, no matter what path they choose. Remember, your children may not hold all the same beliefs and viewpoints that you do. Accept them for the people they have become, affirming them despite their poor decisions, or mistakes. Let them know you love and care about them, always

being available for them if they need you. Always give them proactive support and affirmation.

Many parents feel they are powerless at this time in their children's lives. They regret mistakes they made when their children were young. But is never too late to start again. Be honest, willing to apologize to them if it is necessary, telling them you would like to do better as a parent. That honesty and authenticity will help your relationship grow into one of mutual love and respect.

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Dr. Proactive, Randy Gilbert produces the "Inside Parenting Success Show", hosted by Jodie Lynn. She presents her interview with Martha Pope Gorris (MarthaPopeGorris.com) based upon the tips from her book. Hear the interview for free: <http://www.insidesuccessradio.com/Guests/Martha.Gorris>

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