

Relationship Advice: Managing Your Adult Child's Return To The Nest



By Toni Coleman, LCSW, CMC for [Divorce Support Center](#)

It's that time of the year when young adults are graduating from college, returning home for the summer break, or have decided they want to step back from their lives and return to their parent's home to rethink their options and future direction. During their absence parents often have a nice rhythm going and fear their life and relationship may be upended and they will end up back in parenting mode now that their adult kids will be under their roof again. If you are facing this challenge right now, the following [relationship advice](#) and parenting advice could help you transition to this

new adult-to-adult relationship and avoid falling back into old ruts, conflicts, or dysfunctional dynamics.

Relationship Advice On Managing Your Child's Return Home

1. Start with an open and frank discussion. As the custody battle between [Madonna and ex-husband Guy Ritchie](#) concerning their teenaged son, Rocco, rages on, their circumstance illustrates this relationship advice that you need to be upfront that this is your house, and you will have the final say on what is acceptable and appropriate. Your child is being given permission to live with you, and they will need to adapt to your way of doing things and not the other way around. This does not necessarily mean they will have no input or say or that there will be no room for negotiation around differences. It just means that after talking everything through together, and hearing them out—you will make the final determination on any issue in dispute. In order to avoid relationship problems, you need to be clear that their acceptance of this is a contingency of their living with you.

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2. List your expectations upfront. This is how we handle relationships with peers, isn't it? Therefore, when you speak directly and candidly with your adult child, you are saying that you see them as a peer now and will treat him with the same expectations as you would any other adult. Expectations regarding the handling of household chores, finances, shopping, cooking, and the usage of common space should be aired with the goal of reaching a firm agreement on each. Anything that is shared by or impacts all members of the household would apply here.

3. Discuss boundaries and any rules you want in place. As a relationship expert, I know that boundaries are necessary and important to healthy relationships. Within all households, there are subset relationships—such as parents, children, children and significant others, and any extended family that may be members of the household. Each subset needs to have a boundary around it that distinguishes it from the others. When your young adult comes home, they will need to respect your couple time and privacy, and you will need to acknowledge and respect theirs. If they have a significant other who visits, establishing rules for where and when they will interact in your home will be important to your privacy and theirs, and if not addressed, disharmony and resentment can flourish. If you are concerned about late night noise and arrivals home, it may be necessary to establish a curfew if these disruptions can't be handled in another way.

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4. Don't forget they are adults and need to be treated as such. Don't treat your young adult like you would a minor child or younger teenager. This includes how you speak to them, avoiding attempts to control or dictate their behavior, or making threats about what you will do if they don't comply with your expectations/rules. Instead, present your expectations and any rules in a direct and non-confronting manner. Remind them that it is their choice to live under your roof and that your expectations are a part of that decision and that they are free to change their mind at any time.

Remember that the adjustment to returning home will be as much of a challenge for your adult child as it is for you. Therefore, it is important to remain focused on their feelings and needs along with your own. After all, you put a lot of effort and care into raising them and want them to be well-adjusted and competent adults, right? Helping them to handle this important step towards adulthood may be the last hurdle and one that if handled successfully could pay great dividends

for all of you down the road.

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