



The Kinship Connection

For grandparents raising grandchildren

Dealing With Your Adult Child

Dear Grandparents:

The journey you are undertaking is not an easy one. At times, you are faced with the very difficult balancing act between being a parent to an adult child and a parent to your grandchild. In both cases, different parenting skills are needed.

Many grandparents, raising their grandchildren, have voiced their concerns and frustrations with dealing with their adult children while, at the same time, taking on the role of parent to their grandchildren...you are not alone!

In this edition, we examine this topic and offer some helpful suggestions for setting boundaries, breaking the cycle of a co-dependent relationship and building the structure for communicating with your adult child.



Marilou Rochford, MA, CFLE
County Extension Department Head
Family and Community Health Sciences Educator
Rutgers Cooperative Extension Cape May County

Are You Enabling Your Adult Child?

The definition of enabling is “Fixing problems for others and doing so in a way that interferes with growth and responsibility.”

If you try to “save” your adult child every time he or she is in trouble, you could be creating an enabling dynamic for your adult child that can become a pattern of unhealthy rescuing.

It often feels good as a parent to rescue your child from their problems; however, you may be sending a message to your child that they are not competent to make it on their own.

Enabling:

Removing the natural consequences of someone’s behavior.

- *Codependency Recovery*

Are You An Enabler?

If you think you may be in an enabling relationship with your adult child, consider the following questions:

- Does it feel like you are living from crisis to crisis with your adult child?
- Do you sacrifice too much to meet their needs?
- Are you afraid of hurting or upsetting them?
- Are you feeling burdened, used, and resentful or burnt out?
- Are you constantly defending your adult child's actions?
- Do you often blame yourself or others for their behavior?
- Do you downplay the seriousness of your adult child's issues?

Helpful Tip...

Try not to be adversarial as you encourage your child to become more independent. The goal is to be supportive and understanding with a collaborative mindset.

Be calm, firm and non controlling in your demeanor as you express these guiding expectations to motivate your adult child toward healthy independence.

We cripple people who are capable of walking because we choose to carry them.

christie williams

Steps to take to change the pattern of enabling:

- Do not indiscriminately give money. Providing any financial support should be contingent on many factors, particularly if you are raising your adult child's child(ren).
- Develop a response that you can offer in the event that you are caught off guard. Agree that you will not give an answer for a certain time period.
- Remember that you always have the right to say, "I changed my mind" about a previous promise.
- Set limits on how much time you spend helping your adult child resolve crises. Encourage them to problem-solve by asking, "*What are your ideas?*"
- If your adult child is dealing with addiction, speak to a counselor or join a support group such as Al-Anon.
- Remember you are not in a popularity contest. Be prepared for your child to reject you. They will most likely come around later.

How much do you tell your grandchild?

Children can read emotions by what they hear, see and feel. Even young children understand more than adults think they do. Grandparents are put in tough situations — the question is: *How much should you tell your grandchildren?*

- Consider your grandchild's age, maturity and coping skills.
- Avoid telling your grandchild too much. Many children are simply too young to understand the whole story. Too much information can be confusing, scary and overwhelming.
- Don't belittle the parents to your grandchildren. Name calling, sarcasm or extreme anger could permanently damage the relationship with their parents or with you.
- Never twist facts or lie. Be honest with your grandchildren at their level of understanding.
- Most teenagers can and should know the whole story. Take time to explain all the facts.
- Let them know that, no matter what the situation, you will handle it.

Addiction and Families

Substance abuse does not just impact the one addicted but also their friends and family. Substance abuse impacts how the family functions:

- Financially
- Shifting of family roles and dynamics
- Increased exposure to illness
- Abuse and neglect of children
- Increased risk of children and other family members becoming drug abusers
- Trouble in school for children — academically and disciplinary
- Stigma and social isolation
- Health effects with continued exposure to tobacco, alcohol and drugs and a proven increased risk of disease in substance abuse households

Some Support Available

Al-Anon – open to families and friends of alcoholics and drug addicts, helping them recover from the effects of living with a substance abuser. al-anon.alateen.org

Alateen – a fellowship and support network for young people ages 12 through 20 whose lives have been affected by substance abuse. al-anon.alateen.org

Families Anonymous – a support group for relatives or friends of those with alcohol, drug or behavioral problems. familiesanonymous.org

Cape Assist - Family, Individual, and group counseling: IOP, Relapse Prevention, Women's Relapse Prevention, Anger Management. **Phone:** (609) 522-5960

Cape Counseling Services - Adult/Child mental health and substance abuse treatment. Adult/Adolescent IOP, Relapse Prevention. **Phone:** (609) 465-4100

Crisis Hotline: (609) 465-5999

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group

A program of Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) provides educational and social support to grandparents residing in Cape May County who are primary caregivers for their grandchildren. The group meets monthly except for June and July.

Upcoming FCHS Programs:

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Wednesday, January 17, 5:30 to 7 p.m.
Topic: Internet Safety

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

“Coffee Fridays” - Friday, January 19
10 to 11 a.m.

FCHS 2018 Wellness Workshop Series

“Small Steps to Health and Wealth” Thursday, February 8, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. **Cost \$15** includes dinner

For more information or to register for any of these programs, please call
(609) 465-5115 Ext. 3609

The Kinship Connection is published for grandparents raising grandchildren. Rutgers Cooperative Extension’s educational programs are offered without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County

4 Moore Road, DN 703
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 465-5115 Ext. 3609

Editor:

Marilou Rochford, MA, CFLE

County Extension Department Head
Family and Community Health Sciences

Winter Safety Tips

The American Red Cross offers tips to stay safe during the cold weather. They include...

- **Layer up!** Wear layers of lightweight clothing to stay warm.
- **Don’t forget your furry friends** Bring pets indoors.
- **Remember the three feet rule** If you are using a space heater, place it on a level, hard surface and keep anything flammable at least three feet away.
- **Space Heaters and Fireplaces** Turn off space heaters and make sure fireplace embers are out before leaving the room or going to bed. If you are using a fireplace, use a glass or metal fire screen large enough to catch sparks and rolling logs.
- **Protect your pipes** Run water, even at a trickle, to help prevent your pipes from freezing.
- **The kitchen is for cooking** Never use a stove or oven to heat your home.
- **Use generators outside** Never operate a generator inside the home and don’t hook it up to the home’s wiring, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator.

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call (609) 465-5115 ext. 3609, or email rochford@njaes.rutgers.edu.