



My Adult Child Doesn't Communicate

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Published

April 10th, 2013

Lately I have been repeatedly hearing parents and their adult children talk about how relationships and communication has changed significantly over the years.

As children, our generation would look forward to spending time visiting with parents, grandparents and other relatives, especially when we all got together for holiday celebrations. For example, there wasn't one family member who would ever even think of missing our grandmother's birthday each year - no matter what we needed to do or how far we needed to drive to get there.

Now I hear younger people, when questioned about their loyalty to family, state "This generation is different", "We are too busy" and "Distance is a factor". Adult children often do not answer their phones or return email messages from their parents. They state that they prefer text messaging and making impulsive plans that lack the commitment we feel is necessary in order to be deemed responsible.

Well, I don't really buy it! I was extremely busy when I raised my children but still helped with homework, sat in the bleachers watching their swimming lessons and invested thousands of hours driving them to their numerous activities. And I maintained healthy relationships with extended family members.

If distance is really a factor that prevents adult children from being with family, why is it that they are able to so easily and frequently travel to the Caribbean, Vegas and other holiday spots? And they don't plan those things impulsively!

But, you can't change another person (including the ones you brought into this world) and, as Larry the Cable Guy says "You can't cure stupid". The only one who you can change is you so here are some tips for dealing with inconsiderate adult children:

1. Be specific - They can't read your mind and so you need to be very clear about what you would like. Instead of saying "I never see you anymore" try "I am inviting you to come on August 7th to celebrate my birthday".
2. Use assertive honesty - Treat your adult child the same way that you would any other person who has been rude or negligent towards you. It is acceptable to say "I feel disrespected when you do not return my calls".
3. Allow your child to suffer consequences - If adult children choose not to attend a family reunion then remember that they are really the ones who are missing out. You cannot control or save any adult child! Unfortunately, many of them will end up in my office when they try to deal with regret after you are gone and it is too late to make good choices.
4. Assess and possibly lower your expectations - We are never disappointed unless we have expectations. Perhaps you have not adjusted your mindset or behaviours to accommodate the demands that your child has to deal with at this time.
5. Let go of any dysfunctional or outdated ideas that you have about your parenting role - Your child is now an adult and perhaps you have not adjusted your thinking to acknowledge that. S/he is able to live a much more

independent life than previously and hopefully doesn't need you in the same way that s/he did during school days.

6. Don't think that you need to meet all their needs - Just because an adult child contacts you and asks for something doesn't mean that you need to do exactly what they want. Don't be rude or nasty but develop some healthy boundaries.
7. Focus on your own life - It is your responsibility to be involved in interesting activities that will help you to enjoy your life and be a productive member of society. If you are bored - then you become boring - and miserable. Choose happiness instead.
8. Inspire others! - Your child will likely be influenced by many people and you may become a role-model for many others. Give your best to those around you and pray that others will do the same for your adult child.

You have worked hard in your life to help your child grow and it is no wonder that you question the inappropriate behaviours they demonstrate as adults. However, rather than trying to figure out if or how you made mistakes when raising them, just accept the fact that every person has free will and that means each of us can make our own choices and face the consequences that result from them.