

Coming to Terms With Our Grown Children's Choices

A complimentary resource for *Blessing Your Grown Children* by Debra Evans

It took time, effort, and education to acquire the necessary habits that shaped our daily lives as families during the years when we were responsible for our children's wellbeing. So it makes complete sense that moving on from, rather than holding on to, these familiar patterns will take time, effort, and education too.

Second-stage parenting involves an ongoing willingness to keep our eyes open for the good things ahead as we acquire fresh wisdom. It's also a step-by-step education in how to say yes or no while figuring out when we're being asked to give more than what is wise for us to give and determining what is best and most helpful for us to offer.

While we cannot create, direct, or control the changes taking place in our adult children's lives, it's our responsibility to learn to live with less worry and more peace, less fear and more grace, regardless of their choices and the consequences that follow. The wisdom we gain in the process will bless them, and us, as well.

In coming to terms with the things our grown child does that we cannot control and do not like, approve of, or agree with, we can:

- Accept that it's beyond our control to save or change our adult child.
- Express our concern as well as our love to our son or daughter.
- State that we don't want our acceptance to be misinterpreted as an endorsement for behavior we choose not to support.
- Surrender to God the things we cannot control, including our grown child's life choices that we don't condone or support.

Without a doubt, absolutely, no question: We can't come up with our grown children's best faith expression, earn their perfect job, orchestrate their ideal relationships, change their messy past, or arrange their pain-free future for them. We cannot change them.

But it doesn't stop there. By God's grace and with His Spirit's help, *we can change*. And along the way, our heart's capacity to love and accept our grown children will grow. First Peter 4:8 says, "Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything" (MSG).

Choose how you will make your second-stage parenting way of life a safe place where you and your maturing family can thrive. What will you take out of your nest and leave behind? What do you want to put in as you head into the future?

Below is a summary of ideas that you may find effective as you evaluate and address your current needs in moving ahead:

- Look at and gain new understanding about the ways you have and are playing a role in wisely loving your grown child “as is”.
- Look at and gain new understanding about the ways you have and are playing a role in supporting/enabling your grown child’s unhealthy or irresponsible behavior.
- Stop trying to direct/fix/cover up for/change your grown child.
- Recognize and take responsibility for your contributions to the situation.
- Acknowledge your imperfections and be gracious about acknowledging them in your grown child.
- Seek God’s wisdom about where and how to make changes.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit’s help as you pray for and receive his direction.
- Accept your adult child and yourself without shame.
- Make amends for your mistakes.
- Exercise patience as God tends the wounds of your heart, trusting him to complete his perfect work in you.
- Affirm your responsibility for caring for your physical, emotional, and spiritual health.
- See and accept your emotions for what they are, paying attention to what they may be telling you about unhealthy patterns.
- Learn from your feelings to better understand their source and identify where change may be helpful.
- Refuse to nurture self-pity, resentment, emotional dependency, and dissatisfaction regarding your grown child.
- Benefit from and continue to trust what Bible says about loving others, dealing with your anger, pursuing peace, and not giving up in prayer.
- Take into account that all change, whether beneficial or hazardous, brings opportunities and challenges.
- Counteract the current effects of stress on your life in healthful ways.
- Ask for prayer support and the seasoned counsel of others.
- Accept the strength and encouragement God’s grace provides.
- Hold onto hope.
- Keep pressing on. And don’t think it strange when God reminds you of what you need to work on along the way.