

Setting Boundaries with Adult Children

■ by Kathy Konrath, MA, LCPC, LMHC



Boundaries can be hard to set with anyone; however, when we fail to set boundaries with others, we do not allow the other person to learn to live within their own space, and we, in turn, are prone to resentments, also known as a lack of serenity!

How does this work when the boundary you need to set is with your adult child? Signs that you may need to set boundaries with your adult child include doing their laundry, paying for their gasoline as they borrow your car, allowing them to live at home without a financial or service agreement (aka chores). Author Allison Bottke helps you find serenity as you regain

your SANITY in her book *Setting Boundaries with Adult Children*. Doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results is INSANE! If you want something different in your relationship with your adult child, then something needs to change. The serenity prayer asks God for serenity to “accept the things we cannot change (name of your adult child), change the things we can (your name) and wisdom to know the difference”.

If you are ready and willing to change, take a look at Allison’s quick start guide to setting those boundaries:

S. A. N. I. T. Y.

S – Stop enabling and stop the flow of money! Enabling may be useful when you are helping someone grow. Enabling that is harmful seeks to solve someone’s problem or “help” (with the best intentions, and often without being asked), to the point of not allowing them to take responsibility for their life and the changes that are needed. Stopping the flow of money is simple - just STOP giving them money! If they make it, they spend it. If you make it, and they spend it, you have made a very comfortable bed no one wants to get up from.

A – Assemble a support group. Setting boundaries is not easy, especially when the person is someone you love dearly. Sometimes all we need is permission to do what we know in our hearts is best. Find people who will support you and not co-sign your enabling behavior. Look for someone who will challenge you, give you wisdom, guidance and offer you their strength and hope.

N - Nip excuses in the bud. An excuse is “a reason or explanation that defends or justifies a fault or offense”. Reasons don’t change behavior. Behavior changes behavior. Learn to identify an excuse when you hear it, and then call it out for what it is.

I – Implement rules and boundaries. Consider what your limits are, what you are comfortable with allowing and what is non-negotiable. Write it down. Get **specific**. Next, communicate clearly what the rule or boundary is, as well as the consequence of not honoring the rule or boundary. This allows your child to make a choice. Having a choice is freedom. Once you have clearly established your limits, implement and maintain them.

T - Trust your instincts. Setting boundaries in relationships is not like solving a mathematical equation. You will need wisdom and guidance. Ask God to give you a right thought or action. Listen, and then move forward with what you believe is best. You know that voice inside that tells you something isn’t right? That same voice can also tell you what is right. Take the risk and trust it. God’s got your back.

Y – Yield everything to God. It is an act of surrender and acceptance to turn your child over to God. God knows what your child needs in order to realize things need to change in his or her life. He knows how to help them change, if they are willing. Yielding your child to God allows them the opportunity to open themselves to real change. Get out of God’s way and let him work. Pause, and surrender your child to him (over and over again). ■



For more information about setting boundaries with your adult child check out Allison’s website at www.settingboundariesbooks.com

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