

Avoid the **8 Most Dangerous Mistakes** Parents Make When Their Adult Child Lives at Home

Whether your adult child has never left the nest, or they (like so many in the “boomerang generation”) are returning home after some time away, you’re likely struggling to find ways to make the relationship work. The good news is, adult children *can* live successfully at home – but only if you avoid some critical mistakes right from the start (or correct them right away!).

Read on to discover the 8 most dangerous mistakes you simply *must avoid* when you have adult children living at home!

1 **Dangerous Mistake #1:** **Encouraging rebellion by taking up parenting right where you left off**

It may be hard to remember sometimes, but an adult child living at home is still an adult. That means you can’t parent them the same way you did when they were a child. A sure way to set yourself up for conflict is to *over-parent* your adult children.

Whatever the reasons for their being at your home, you simply can’t control your adult child’s life. Adult children who are over-parented and over-supervised will rebel as quickly as teenagers, so you need to develop some strategies to establish a new adult-to-adult relationship – quick!

A key step is recognizing the difference between *house rules* and *life rules*.

2 **Dangerous Mistake #2:** **Letting anger and resentment destroy your relationship with your children**

If your adult child is moving back in with you in a time of crisis – or if they’ve never left your comfortable nest – it means they see you as a stable force in their life, a warm and welcoming parent who will be there for them

through thick and thin. And the truth is, you *want* to be that parent who can solve everything for your child.

But when two generations of adults live in one household, it's extremely easy for anger and resentment to build up on both sides. And once those bitter emotions have crept into a relationship, they are extremely difficult to overcome.

That's why it's critical that you and your adult child work together to develop **communications techniques and strategies** that will deal with negative feelings *before* they take over – and potentially damage your relationship with your child forever.

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Dangerous Mistake #3:

Stealing your child's independence by giving them a "free ride"

If an adult child is really struggling to get on their feet – especially if they've returned home after a personal crisis like losing a job or the end of a relationship – it can be very tempting to give them a "free ride," at least for a little while.

The problem is that a little while can easily turn into a little while longer, and pretty soon it's a long-term arrangement that's leaving everyone miserable.

If your adult child was out of your home for a time, they already know how to be independent. Don't let them slip back into depending on you for everything or they will lose the valuable life skills they've already learned.

And if your child has never left, the very worst thing you can do is cover all of their expenses! Why should they ever learn to take care of themselves when you're all too eager to do it for them? That free ride is damaging your children and it needs to stop.

Even a short-term stay should require your adult child to contribute to household expenses and chores, and these contributions should be clearly established as part of the ground rules. The best way to set these rules clearly is by working out a household budget, so everyone is on the same page in terms of the extra costs your adult child is causing at home.

Which brings us to dangerous mistake #4...

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Dangerous mistake #4:

“We’re all adults here, so there’s no need for rules”

We’ve already told you how dangerous it can be to over-parent your adult children. But a failure to establish some clear ground rules can be the deathblow to any family living arrangement.

If you think you don’t need ground rules, consider how you’d feel if your adult child engaged in any of the following behaviors that they might think are totally okay:

- smoking in the house
- bringing a lover to stay overnight
- drinking in the home
- noisy late-night parties
- borrowing your car without asking
- leaving the kitchen a total mess
- using drugs in your home

... and that’s not even considering some of the worst behavior that can happen when adult children live at home – like stealing, or being physically or emotionally abusive towards you or your spouse.

Even if your child has always been an angel, it’s important to establish the expectations for how they will behave as an adult in your home. The expectations – and the rules – will be different than when they were young, but there still need to be rules so that everyone knows what they can expect and what they are responsible for, *and* so that there can be clear consequences if the rules are broken.

But the rules aren’t just about the kids – in order to have a successful relationship with adult children living at home, you’ll need to follow some important ground rules too!

As strange as it may sound, experts agree that the best way to discuss – and stick to – these household rules is to **draft up a customized contract** between you and your “kids.”

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Dangerous mistake #5:

Assuming your adult child will leave when the time is right

The best way to ensure your adult child leaves home within a reasonable timeframe is to work together to establish a clear timeline for their stay and milestones to help them reach independence.

Most adult children don't plan to live with their parents forever. For many, it can be an unpleasant and uncomfortable situation that leaves them feeling weak and damaging their self-esteem. But if they don't have any clear idea of when they need to leave – or how they'll work towards being able to do so, they may end up stuck.

By establishing a timeline with clear milestones, you can empower your adult child to leave the nest. If you don't create a timeline, they may end up calling your house “home” for much longer than you – or even they – had planned.

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Dangerous mistake #6:

Sacrificing your relationship with your spouse (this mistake is especially dangerous if the adult children are “steps”)

Having extra people in your house puts a strain on the other relationships you have in your life – especially the relationship you have with your partner.

According to a recent study, **parents with adult children living at home have 10% more arguments than empty-nesters**. When the adult children are living with a parent and the parent's partner, things can be even worse.

If your children are moving back into your home as adults, or sticking around longer than your partner thinks they should, your privacy and independence will be compromised. You will no longer be able to dedicate as much of your time and attention to your partner, and if their needs are no longer being met, they will understandably be upset.

Of course you want to do the best you can for your children, but doing so at the expense of your own happiness will *not* make you a better parent. In fact, if you damage your relationship with your partner so seriously that they leave, you may end up relying on your adult children for emotional (or even financial) support, creating a vicious cycle that is impossible to break.

But with some simple coping strategies, and a few key discussions with your partner, you *can* all live together in peace.

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Dangerous mistake #7: Trampling your adult child's ability to be a good parent to their own children

When your adult child moves back home with an entire family in tow, your life changes drastically – and your lifestyle can take a sharp downward turn.

In addition to the other challenges associated with an adult child living at home, you'll likely have to deal with the expectation that you'll be a full-time babysitter – for free. That may be okay if you're retired and your child is working full time. But what if they take advantage of the free sitting services to start staying out late, partying, or generally shirking their parental responsibilities?

The most important thing for your grandchildren is that your own child continues to be a good parent. You can help your child be a good parent without damaging their credibility or undermining their authority, but you have to walk a fine line to make it work.

When adult children come home with families of their own, the ground rules and expectations must be crystal clear. And your adult children *must* understand that no matter what they may be going through in their own lives, it is their responsibility to parent their children – not yours. Otherwise, you may end up making dangerous mistake #8...

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Dangerous mistake #8: Compromising your own financial situation – or even taking on a second job – to support your adult child and their family

Whether it's just one extra person moving into your home or an entire family, the simple truth is that more people = more dollars. You'll be using more heat, hot water, and electricity. You'll need to buy more groceries. You may even feel you need to get a bigger home!

But no matter what you do, do *not* put your own financial future on the line to support your adult children. Do *not* take on a second job. You do neither yourself nor your child any good by creating extra debt or obligations for yourself.

You need to work out a budget for your household and ensure it's something *everyone* can live with. If you don't know where the money to make the situation work will come from, you need to think long and hard about whether you can help your adult child by having them live at your home.

With some simple budgeting strategies you can get a good overview of the situation before your child moves home – as long as you know the most important budgeting questions you need to ask yourself and your child.

Final Thoughts

Having an adult child living at home can be extremely challenging for everyone involved. But there are some simple steps you can take to make the situation easier for everyone, and avoiding these 8 dangerous mistakes is a key step.

Remember that a successful relationship with your adult child living at home really boils down to establishing good ground rules and managing expectations. One of the best ways to do that is to create a contract that everyone in the home will stick to.

For detailed information on how to avoid these traps, along with a customizable “Under one Roof” contract and household budget calculator, visit www.AdultChildrenLivingAtHome.com today.