

## Parents to Children: Home Again for the Summer

With the school year winding down, parents of college-age children may be airing out their child's room in anticipation of the child's homecoming.

Trouble is, a child who's been living on his or her own at school is not likely to still view his or herself as a child. While living away from home, a child will have tested his or her own independence, but may not realize that parents have had an opportunity to enjoy an empty nest, with less time spent balancing family responsibilities and more time for each other.

A child's return can be welcome, but difficult. Parents and children can both benefit from respecting the growth that will have occurred during the separation. Communication—and a willingness to compromise—are key to making a summer vacation enjoyable for everyone. Here are some tips to consider:

- Parents often revert to house rules such as a curfew that was in place before the child left home. To work out a compromise with respect for each point of view, talk about hours. Be willing to relax the rules a bit, but still set boundaries. If, for example, a young adult child will be out later than expected, a quick call or text message—"We're going to the late movie and I should be home around ..."—may be all that's needed to put parents at ease, but still respect their concern.
- Post schedules on a calendar that is accessible to all—the kitchen may a good place. Work together to balance responsibilities and meet needs, including who uses the bathroom first, feeds the family pets, and cleans up the breakfast table.
- Who does the cooking and cleanup? Again, work together to share responsibilities for food preparation and cleanup for meals and snacks. Be specific about dos and don'ts, such as leaving dirty dishes on the counter or family room floor.
- Laundry? Does this job revert to Mom or Dad? Is it okay to do laundry at midnight? Perhaps not, if Mom or Dad has to be out the door to work early. Set boundaries, and abide by them.
- Housework? Sharing the load is key.
- Money matters. Grocery and utility bills typically increase proportionally with family size. While children may be saving summer earnings toward educational expenses, asking an adult to chip in to help meet expenses is a reasonable request. If a job loss, separation or divorce is prompting the move home, an adult child experiencing loss also will need time for emotional healing.

Talk about a time line that will allow the child to grow through the transitional time, regain their sense of self and restore confidence, so that the child can regain his or her independence.

Listen, but don't coddle, make excuses or take sides. If a son or daughter brings home a child, set limits. When it comes to disciplining

a grandchild, grandparents are encouraged to defer to the child's parents, unless the parent is absent and the grandchild is in danger.

Family relationships are precious. Talk about everyday events before a situation is allowed to become an issue, and be willing to compromise. In the big picture, it's the relationship that matters most.

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