When Should Parents Stop Being a Parent to an Adult Child?

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Parental Roles Across the Life Course

Parents are the most solid foundation of every person's life. From birth, the child is dependent on the parents for care, education, needs, and comfort. Parents, on the other hand, try to cope with understanding the child's mental state to rear their child in the best possible way. The bond that forms between a child and parents is the most mounting in the sense that it is centralized on the core of the child's growth and the parents' love for their child. Every parent looks out for the best resources for their child, whether expensive or inexpensive, depending upon the economic status. Parents are the ones who persevere and show flexibility towards the problems in the way of parenting.

Changing Parent-Child Relationships in Adulthood

The child-parent relationship is dynamic and changes throughout the life course. The life path of a child from adolescence to adulthood impacts the parent-child bond in terms of different variables such as moving in with a partner of choice, leaving parents, entering parenthood, or gaining financial independence. The parent-child bond gets stronger as the child enters into adulthood. According to data from the study, 1,064 young adults in the age group of 16-21 were examined for the balance in their relationships with their parents for a period of six years. The result reported that adolescents, as they aged, felt more loving toward their parents. [1] The children develop a sense of balance in their lives through the relationships they form with their parents. It is estimated from a few studies that adults get into a good relationship with their parents over time, and their welfare is dependent on the kind of relationship. A good and reasonable relationship with the parents influences their well-being. According to a quote mentioned in the paper, "When my parents criticize my behavior, I take it to heart"; "I can still learn a lot from my parents." It is evident that the parent-child bond gets stronger with age, and children look out for lifestyle attitudes from their parents. [1]

Theories of Adult Child Independence

There are three hypothetical aspects through which transitions in the parent-child bond can be predicted. The theories hypothesized are individuation, role identity, and stress and uncertainties theory. According to individuation theory, the element of individual sense or autonomy develops in adults through financial stability, which leads to less dependence on their parents. The focus of the child diverges from closeness to advancement in professional life, which affects the bond. The second theory is role identity, which focuses on the role of the child in the transition from the young phase to parenthood. The adults form emotional connections by being in the shoes of a parent and developing a connection based on the role. A third theory suggests that life transitions destabilize the equilibrium in the pattern of the bond.

Parental Guidance and Adult Autonomy

The parents should not advise the young adolescent that much once they become financially independent because this might offend them. Adults love to be autonomous, and strict parenting can affect them badly. Closeness in the bond shifts with external factors like career, marriage, and parenthood. However, role theory is in favor of the child developing closeness in the bond when he or she enters the parenthood phase. Parents must have a coherent approach to life transitions and give the child a sense of love and affection despite all the temporary barriers. The expectations of parents must synchronize with the mindset and age of the child in terms of parenting.

Executive Function Development and Parenting

Executive function or cognitive ability is linked to achievement, stabilization in adolescence, and parenting. Executive function among young children is linked to their parents' genetics by about 99 percent. Parenting behavior plays a significant role in a child's cognitive skill development.[3] The parents are the attention switches for the young developing child, but during adolescence, children mature and stabilize their cognitive skills with brain development. They become in charge of their lives. The parent-child bond in the developmental age becomes stronger with positive parenting behavior that includes direction and maintenance of discipline. This authoritarian parenting is effective for children aged 9-14. [2] However, as the children become autonomous, the parenting pattern should be changed. The executive function of the child changes the brain of the adolescent, and a sense of self-regulation is developed in him. The child learns with each error at this phase of life and is open to self-regulation. This is the time when a parent should stop parenting. The adolescent learns more through socialization in the educational and professional world.

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