

Step 1. Learn about delayed emotional growth.

In addition to alcohol or drug abuse, your loved one may have another issue. It serves as a silent partner in keeping addiction active and resistant to change. A person with **Delayed Emotional Growth** exhibits behaviors that lack adult responsibility and life skills. You see the addicted loved one as an adolescent or younger child since those are the prevalent behaviors displayed. Yet he or she is an adult and must or should be treated like one.

Step 2. Transition to an adult-to-adult relationship.

In American culture, there is not a formal rite of passage when a child becomes an adult. One key to helping your adult child mature emotionally is for everyone to acknowledge that he or she is an adult. Even though it was not your fault, you may choose to apologize to your adult child for having treated him or her as an adolescent. Your “helping” has actually been hurting. Express your determination to treat him or her like an adult. Resolve to do this — especially in difficult situations.

Step 3. Set realistic boundaries & consequences.

Once your adult-to-adult relationship is in place, you can establish what is acceptable in your relationship. You can also establish consequences — what happens when those mutually agreed upon boundaries are crossed. When over-stepping bounds, your adult child has to handle the consequences as an adult. You no longer will over-help him or her.

It will take time and practice to learn, but you will see the wisdom in treating your loved one like an adult even when they act like a child. Your loved one has to adjust to this new perspective. Understanding what is acceptable and what consequences occur when that agreement isn't respected helps you – and your loved one – stay on course.

Step 4. Cut strings to encourage responsibility.

Strings are usually financial. They might be obvious, but often they're not. (i.e. paying phone bills, storing belongings, providing room and board, receiving mail, paying auto expenses, etc.) You'll be able to pinpoint certain situations where strings are keeping your adult child from making positive changes. Once you learn to identify these strings, you can plan the wisest ways and times to cut them.

Step 5. Write your own plan.

Written plans provide road maps for achievement as well as accountability. A **Family Plan** can be created by you with or without the help of a professional. As parents, it's important to agree with each other about what you will and will not do to help your loved one. This plan should include things such as steps for cutting strings. It's recommended that you complete your plan before approaching your loved one.

Step 6. Encourage your adult child to write their own plan for moving forward in life.

Your loved one may receive benefits from developing a **Recovering Person's Plan**. A professional can best help your adult child create this plan. The goals need to come from your loved one, yet as parents you have input about his or her goals when they require your assistance. Your loved one's plan might list goals such as finding a job, saving money, paying debts, and consequences of relapse.



Lesson Notes

Treating my loved one like an a_____ helps them progress on the road to r_____.

Writing out a plan helps us achieve it and keeps us a_____.