

Treat your college-age students like adults, not kids

My daughter returned home for the summer from her first year of college. We don't agree on the rules of behavior, and the tension is building. What can I do (besides count the days until she returns to campus)?

It's not unusual for families to have trouble readjusting when children — who are now young adults — return home after being on their own for awhile. In fact, the same is true even if the kids don't leave after high school, remaining at home while they enter the workforce or commute to classes. This isn't new, either. A 1996 study published in the journal *New Directions for Child Development* revealed that young adults who live at least an hour away from home reported the best relationships with their parents; those who still lived at home reported the poorest relationships.

But, yes, there are things you can do to make this summer more pleasant for everyone in your household.

One thing you can do is to examine your own behavior. A 2006 study on parent-child relationships published in the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* suggests that parents need to learn to treat their college-age children as adults. Not only does that mean openly discussing and determining house rules, but also making sure that everyone, including your daughter, has a share in handling household responsibilities.

Both you and your daughter may be anxious about the current situation and what the future holds. She may feel uncertain



about her status as an adult, especially in relation to you, her parent. You may hear about more and more college graduates needing to move back with their parents because of the tight job market and wonder if she will ever make a smooth transition into financial and social independence.

Though you both might harbor different concerns, keep this in mind: You both want the same thing. You both want your daughter to grow into a responsible, successful adult who treats others respectfully. And guess what? You have this summer to help her become that person.

To do that, you need to start treating her less like a teenager and more like an adult. What are the rules of behavior you disagree on? Openly discuss your concerns, and ask her about her views. If she has ideas that conflict with yours, remember — that's not disrespect. It's just an independent mind.

When you disagree, work on ways to find a middle ground. Demonstrating that skill will help your daughter practice it, which will serve her well in the future.

Need more ideas? See the post "Tips for a Happy Summer" on the Eat, Save and Be Healthy blog written by Ohio State University Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences professionals. The post offers ideas for both parents and returning college students. It's online at <http://go.osu.edu/adjust>.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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