

# Getting it together

## Be a friend to grown children

A reader recently asked for help in dealing with her 20-year-old son. After years of borderline grades, he has recently dropped out of college. He is moving toward dropping out of the work-and-college-oriented value system of his parents.

"How can parents influence their adult offspring?" she asked. What did she and her husband do wrong as par-

ents? Is there any way they can undo some of their parental mistakes now? Tough questions, yet they are frequently asked.

Even the most dedicated and skillful parents are often confronted with the disappointment of watching their grown-up sons and daughters stumble in adult roles. Parents cringe at bro-

By  
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ken marriages, career failures and unconventional lifestyles.

They feel each adult child's failure as if it were their own personal failure. Even worse, they experience tremendous guilt. They remember every mistake they made as parents and are convinced they have let their children down.

If only they had been firmer or more understanding or less loving, they are sure their children would be fully successful adults.

Much of this guilt is a product of the age of popular psychology which holds that all of our problems as adults have roots in childhood. Flawed parenting causes flawed adults. At least, that's what it says in books.

KNEE-DEEP in theories, techniques and advice, today's parents are often overwhelmed with the intricacy of their role. Parenting has moved from the world of instinct to the world of intellect.

Modern parents listen more to their head and less to their hearts when dealing with children. Parenting in the Freudian age has become a technical art, complete with gimmicks and an over-critical obsession with errata-nating even subtle flaws.

For parents of young adults, the most serious side-effect of this time of perfectionistic parenting is the tendency to see the adult lives of their children totally as products of their parenting.

In actuality, the influence that parents have over the lives of adult sons and daughters decreases drastically during adolescence and even more when they first leave home.

Furthermore, parallel to this declining parental influence is the increasing need of every young adult to establish an individual identity. The late teens and early 20s are filled with questioning and experimenting. Even the most firmly taught parental value must be weighed in a search for one's own value system.

All of this is a natural, healthy process. But it is pervaded by false starts, bizarre side-trips and a lot of stumbling.

FOR PARENTS who continue to feel responsible for their offspring during this important growing phase, this period can be trying. Stripped of the ability to influence grown-up children, guilt-ridden parents are left to feel helpless and miserable.

Instead of viewing the fumbling of a son or daughter as the necessarily clumsy beginning of adulthood, responsible parents wince with guilt with every fall. This is especially sad when you realize that what these fumbling young adults need is not guilt-ridden parents, but older, supportive friends.

ADULTS WHO stumble need friends and family who can help them feel all right about themselves, even when they have made mistakes. Growing adults need the support of feeling accepted even when they are exploring the limits of values in search of their identity.

Brused young adults need to hear how friends and family also have made stupid mistakes while growing up.

They need support from fellow stumbling human beings who have fallen, picked up the pieces and continued to cope with life.

Such support can only be given by parents when they have truly left their child-raising roles behind them.

When responsibility and guidance are replaced by compassion, parents can become some of the most valuable friends a young man or woman can have.

Bob Trenz is a Rochester psychologist and marriage counselor. Questions for Dr. Trenz may be sent to the Rochester Observer & Eccentric, 410 N. Main, Rochester, 55802.

## Wesley College lists adult offerings

John Wesley College's Center for Continuing Education in Farmington will open registration for its new listing of classes on Monday, Jan. 5.

All classes meet in the off-campus center, at 2700 Farmington Road, for a period of 11 weeks. Classes may be taken for credit or non-credit. In some cases students may enroll for additional credits, with the instructor's permission.

Claire Orlan will teach a class on "Human Potential" which stresses building self-esteem on Tuesdays from 7-9:40 p.m.

Also on Tuesdays, from 9:30 a.m.-12 noon, Sandra Landsman will teach a class on Transactional Analysis, in a three-credit unit.

SIMULTANEOUSLY on Mondays, from 4-4:40 p.m., Kathy Wood will teach "Developmental Issues Infancy" and Barbara Layman will teach "Pastoral Counseling With Children" each for three credits.

Ms. Wood's class on Mondays for one credit is "Development of Creative Activities for the Pre-School

Understanding the Emotional Needs of Teenagers" is scheduled for Mondays with instructor Kenneth Acherson, and "New Directions in Pastoral Care" also on Mondays from 1:30-4 p.m. will be taught by Rev. Carl Gunderson.

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