***Welcoming An Adult Child Back Home Because of COVID-19***

March 27, 2020 by Kevin Collins, SVP, Director of Parent and Community Support Services More

Many of us now find our adult-aged children unexpectedly back at home. And not just home, but in the house, 24/7. This may have happened for a number of reasons. Their college may have closed. They may have had their own place, but feel safer at home. They may not be able to afford their own home because of lost work.

You’re likely experiencing a variety of emotions — happy and thankful that your child is healthy, safe and back at home, or perhaps, concerned about how your family will manage with everyone under one roof. How long this will last and what will the academic, financial or health outcomes be?

Our recommendation is to have a conversation with your child about how you (and anyone else in your home) will live together. Some families might consider a contract while others may find that too formal.

The important thing is to talk about what you expect from one another. You can use the following ideas to help guide the discussion:

1. **Invite your child to talk.** Find a time that works for both of you, and have the conversation in “neutral territory” (for example, the kitchen table instead of one of your bedrooms). If you are parenting with a partner, try to include them in the conversation too.
2. **Remind them that you love them.** A great starting place is to let your child know how much you love them and that you are glad they’re safe. Let them know you enjoy having this extra time together.
3. **Try to show empathy and understanding.** Acknowledge that it can be upsetting to be pulled away from a place where they were comfortable, the plans they had made, their usual activities and close relationships. Ask questions to understand how you can best support them. Let them know that a lot of people feel the same way and that their feelings or disappointments are real.
4. **Reinforce social distancing.** Most jurisdictions are ordering some form of social distancing and/or curfews. You may need to reinforce these rules to your child, not only for their safety, but for the safety of other members in the home.
5. **Reconsider rules.** This can also be a time to relax some restrictions you imposed before they left home. Maybe they can sleep in later than you’d like, or spend more time on screens than you are initially comfortable with. Cell phones and social media were a primary means of communication prior to social distancing. Now, this is the only way they can connect with friends.
6. **Discuss expectations.** What does your child expect of you, and what do you expect of them? It may be hard to see the person sitting across from you as another adult, but they are. Saying “my house, my rules” and dictating an arrangement may be a recipe for conflict. You could start the conversation by inviting them to help problem solve, saying “What can we do to help make our living arrangement manageable?”

Consider discussing privacy, chores, finances, work, transportation, having friends over, etc. It can help to listen closely and offer ways to compromise. You can also agree to revisit an expectation at some point down the road if there are differing viewpoints.

1. **Give your child autonomy.** As school and workplaces start to offer online options, let your child manage their own schedule. That’s what they do when they are away from home. It’s not your responsibility to ensure they finish that class or work assignment – it is theirs. You may want to allow them to experience the natural consequences of the decisions they make. That said, you can support them by trying to create a quiet place where they can focus on their work.
2. **Consider their safety**. Be mindful of potential issues related to substance use. The following are some tougher issues to tackle:
* If your child was legally (or illegally) drinking or using other substances when they were living away from home, you can establish boundaries around their use in your home. This may be a good time to help your child reestablish healthier habits.
* If your child uses prescribed medications for a mental health issue, such as depression or ADHD, encourage them to consult with their prescriber to ensure there is no disruption in treatment. You may also offer to help them manage their medication if they are offered a longer-term supply.
* With the cancellation of many in-person support groups, [**remote or online resources**](https://drugfree.org/parent-blog/covid-19-online-and-remote-resources-for-addiction-support/) may be helpful if your child is in recovery. Be aware of the risks of relapse. If your child is open to a discussion, talk about how you can help him or her manage triggers.
* If your child has struggled with opioids, like Oxycontin and Vicodin or heroin, have [**naloxone**](https://drugfree.org/article/overdose-response-treatment/) (e.g. Narcan) at home and know how to use it. You can get it from most local pharmacies or community recovery centers.
* If your child is dependent on substances, particularly alcohol or benzodiazepines (e.g., Xanax, Ativan, Valium, Klonopin), be aware of the risks of withdrawal. Your child may need supervised medical care to avoid seizures or other complications from withdrawal. Getting your child help sooner rather than later may be critical if medical capacity becomes stretched.

Last, but certainly not least, consider your own self-care during this time. You’re not alone if you feel stressed by the extraordinary measures our country is taking to ensure everyone’s safety. It may help to plan some “me time,” if possible, or ways to have fun as a family. Know that [**we are here to provide some extra support**](https://drugfree.org/article/online-support-community-for-parents-caregivers/) as we get through this crisis together.