



Positive Parenting your Horizons Student for Independence

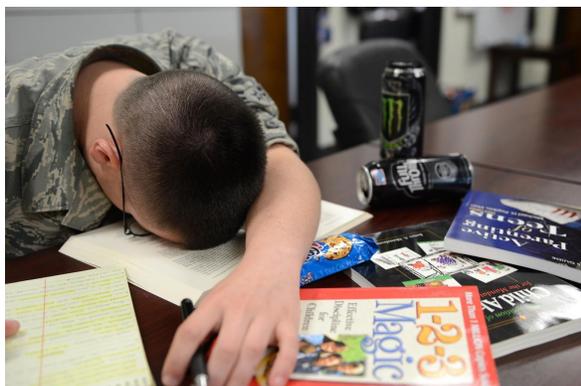
Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2019

The theme for this issue of Positive Parenting is changing expectations and roles when parenting a young adult with learning disabilities. Parents aim to develop life skills that will sustain community independence, yet best intentions may hinder growth and adaptation!

Attempts to minimize challenges and avoid frustration lead some parents to act like a lawnmower or helicopter. A recent nationally representative poll of parents and young adults ages 18-28 was conducted by the New York Times and Morning Consult. Results from 1,136 parents and 1,508 young adults revealed intrusive parenting practices that impede their child's developing maturity.

Nearly one-fourth of parents help their child study for a college exam. Three fourths of respondents remind their adult child of deadlines to meet and schedule their appointments, including for clinical care. Sixteen percent helped write all or part of applications for an internship or paid job. Eleven percent contact their adult child's employer to discuss issues at work. Twelve percent help their adult child to pay rent and other bills.

The Problem of Over Parenting



As parents, we care for our children and practice caution, desiring to keep them safe from physical and emotional injuries. As children age, they explore new opportunities, make independent decisions, including choices we do not prefer. What is the concern about over-parenting an emerging adult, taking control for every aspect of their life?

Julie Lythcott-Haims, NY Times Best-Selling author and former dean at Stanford University,

asks parents, do you prepare your adult child for the road they will travel or strive to straighten and clear the road for your child? Parenting practices that attempt to anticipate and remove all potential obstacles may, in fact, rob the young adult of learning through their own actions.

...acute mild stress is beneficial for brain development, social skills and behaviors, and even intelligence. It has even been shown that acute stress, unlike chronic stress, is good for the immune system! - Nathan Lentz, Ph.D.

We live in a world of social comparison and competitive practices. You want only the best for your adult child, preventing failure and upset, but when is it natural to withdraw daily support? Do you feel guilty when you withdraw support? Remember, this is not about you, but about facilitating the development of your child.

Consider your expectations. Do you fear your child cannot succeed unless you manage their choices and actions? Of course, you have knowledge and experience to share! Do you show trust by permitting your child to consider alternatives, choose an action and evaluate outcomes for themselves? For instance, do you program social outings, matching your young adult to another whom you approve?

The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice. — Peggy O'Mara

It is a misconception that task failure will damage self-esteem. As parents, we want our children to attribute success to their effort, skills and ability, rather than happenstance or fate. Accepting personal responsibility and recovering from mistakes are important for each of us. According to Lythcott-Haims, parents "can't just arrive them at the future you want for them. They have to do the work to build the skills." Success and failures are necessary experiences for development of self-esteem.

Teens and young adults need continued family support and encouragement. We want our children to foresee a successful future for themselves. Parents may support life plans and determination, teach their young adult about disability rights and resources, and introduce them to social networks.

Practical Strategies to Consider

1. Establish a new adult relationship with your child. Challenge them to become resilient and apply what they have learned!
2. Avoid the temptation to interfere with your student's friendships and relations with supervisors and coworkers. Students are learning how to effectively communicate with others and build lasting relationships.



3. Make suggestions, role-play, identify threats and opportunities, and support your young adult's plan of action. Do not attempt to directly resolve their problems and issues.
4. Select video models, excerpts from films and television programs, that promote discussion and problem-solving. Ask open-ended questions, such as "what did the lead character learn from her choices? What do you predict would happen if she made a different choice?"
5. Guide your young adult to evaluate outcomes of their decision, considering expected and unexpected consequences.

Helpful Resources

Julie Lythcott-Haims (2015). *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*. NY: St. Martin's Griffin Press.

Nathan H. Lentz (2016, Aug. 28). Yes, Overprotecting Parenting Harms Kids. *Psychology Today*.

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (2012, September). *The Guideposts for Success: A Framework for Families Preparing Youth for Adulthood*, Issue 36, http://www.ncwd-youth.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/infobrief_36.pdf

Talk Back

What topics do you recommend for future newsletters? What exceptional effort would you like to recognize for your student or their mentors? We want to hear from you! Below are examples of comments/suggestions we have received.

- Thank you for sharing news with us. I truly love reading them and feeling like a part of Horizons! - community partner
- Thank you. This newsletter is great for any parent especially in my 'hood!! - Horizons parent
- Changing parental behaviors when the student is a young adult can be difficult for both parent and the young adult. Support of each is necessary.

The Horizons School - Preparing young Adults with learning difficulties for an Independent Life.

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