

Five Steps to Help Your Substance Abusing **Adult** Child

As you learn more about your adult child's alcohol or drug problems, you may also notice his or her *Delayed Emotional Growth* (or, as Bill W. would say, *Lack of Emotional Sobriety*). The theory is that 90% of addicts and alcoholics have this problem. It is as serious as the substance abuse issue, but more difficult to identify. Having *Delayed Emotional Growth* means that, through no fault of parents, an adult child is "stuck" *emotionally* in their adolescence.

Here are Changes You can Make to Help Your Child With Maturity

1) Announce Commitment to Change Your Parent-Child Relationship.

In modern American culture, there is no structured rite-of-passage for a child to become an adult. Key to helping your adult child mature emotionally, is to acknowledge that he or she is now an adult. It will also mean treating your child like an adult even in difficult and challenging situations. Some parents have found it helpful to apologize to their adult child for treating him or her as an adolescent for too long.

Example: "I'm learning to treat you like an adult instead of a child. Please forgive me for not doing this sooner."

2) Practice Setting Boundaries and Consequences on the Help You Provide Your Child

Establish what is, and is not, acceptable and what happens when agreed-upon boundaries are crossed. If he or she over-steps bounds, they have to handle the consequences as an adult. You will no longer over-help your child, and everyone knows why. It will take time and practice to learn, but you will see the wisdom in treating your adult child as an adult, even when they act like a child. Your adult child may need to adjust to this new perspective but understanding what is acceptable and what happens when an agreement is broken, helps you and your adult child stay on course.

Example: "You can live in my house if you don't use drugs. If you want to use drugs, you can live somewhere else."

3) Use "Rite Of Passage Talk" When Communicating With Your Child

You can learn to use language that more clearly indicates your belief in your child's ability to have a responsible, successful, independent and drug free, life as an adult.

Example: "I'm saying no to your request for money because I believe so much in your independence."

4) Cut Financial Strings.

You're not ending or cutting all financial help. You are eliminating financial aid that your child can use for alcohol or drugs.

Example: "I want you to be on your own cell phone plan, because I believe in your independence."

5) Use Written Contracts and Agreements.

Written plans provide road maps for achievement as well as accountability. A **Family Plan** can be created by you, with or without assistance from a professional, but it's vital that parents agree with each other on details of the plan before approaching their child.

Example: Using the "Recovering Person's Plan" available at www.SpeakmanCoaching.com website.