



Helping children leave the nest and gaining a better adult relationship

With all the attention on where your kids are going, little may have been said about where they are leaving. Each year thousands of children leave home and some for the very first time.

Parents would do well to remember their first experience of leaving home. For many it came easily, but for some it was accompanied by stress and for others conflict. In remembering their own experience, parents next have to consider the experience they want to provide their son or daughter.

This experience of leaving home is important psychologically for children, now young adults, and parents alike. The experience can set the tone for the next stage of family development; adult-to-adult relationship with your child. Remember, they will likely be married some day and you will want to see your grandchildren.

So no more telling a child what to do. After managing through adolescence, parents are faced with the fact that their child is a young adult. Long gone are the days of parental authority. Coming to terms with this fact lies at the heart of the leaving home experience and can impact on your son or daughters sense of adult security and your future relationship together.

Perhaps it is not so much that the parents must reassure their children that they will be all right, but that the parents must reassure themselves and not let their concerns impede the children's departure. Let them leave in peace and do not try to cram in all the lessons left untaught. Some lessons are only gained by leaving home.

For a better leaving home experience consider these suggestions:

1. Talk with your son or daughter about their feelings of leaving home. Don't

push on whether they will miss you though, as this feeling might actually be your own. If it doesn't come up, then maybe the thought hasn't crossed their mind in the excitement of the experience.

2. Reminisce with them about their growing up and the pleasures you have had along the way. Marvel at their growth and accomplishments and your anticipation of future accomplishments.
3. Plan well for the departure so the actual moment isn't fraught with last minute errands or conflicts. Offer your help and be prepared to stand back or jump in – only as requested or discussed. Your hand is no longer attached to the bicycle seat and you have to let go now again.

If you follow these suggestions you may experience a smoother transition to an adult relationship with your son or daughter. This kind of experience can repair past conflicts with your child and improve the odds of having a great relationship as adults.

Gary Direnfeld, MSW, RSW
www.yoursocialworker.com
gary@yoursocialworker.com
(905) 628-4847

Gary Direnfeld is a child-behaviour expert, a social worker, and the author of Raising Kids Without Raising Cane. Gary not only helps people get along or feel better about themselves, but also enjoys an extensive career in public speaking. He provides insight on issues ranging from child behaviour management and development; to family life; to socially responsible business development. Courts in Ontario, Canada consider Gary an expert on matters pertaining to child development, custody and access, family/marital therapy and social work.

Buy the book:
To order Direnfeld's book, Raising Kids Without Raising Cane, send a cheque or money order in the amount of \$12.00 to:
Interaction Consultants,
20 Suter Crescent, Dundas, Ontario, L9H 6R5

Are you the parent of new teen driver? Check out this teen safe driving program: www.ipromiseprogram.com