Contents

Foreword by Dr. Bill Maier ....................... vii

PART 1:
The Crowded Nest: When Adult Children
    Live at Home ............................ 1
    Why Adult Children Come Home .......... 9
    Six Problems to Anticipate When Adult
    Children Return Home .................. 16

PART 2:
Making Living Together Work for Everyone ...... 25
    Strengthening the Family ................. 27
    Giving Advice in a Healthy Way .......... 35
    Lending or Giving Money without
    Going Broke ............................. 40
    Saying No to Your Adult Children without
    Slamming the Door ...................... 46
    Dealing with Your Adult Child’s Struggles .. 52
    Forgiving Adult Children Who
    Disappoint You .......................... 60
When It's Time to Push Them Out  
of the Nest .......................... 68

Conclusion .......................... 75

Notes .............................. 79

Resources .......................... 81
Foreword

Tim and Karen are an active couple in their mid-fifties with three grown kids. They’ve saved their money and invested well over the years, and Tim is planning to take an early retirement. They’re looking forward to serving on a one-year medical mission project in Indonesia.

Last week they received a panicked call from their 27-year-old daughter, Kim, who lives in California. Kim shared that her five-year marriage is on the rocks and she has left her husband. In addition, the corporation she works for has just announced a major layoff, leaving her jobless. She was calling her parents to ask if she can move back home and live with them—beginning next week.
Millions of American families have adult children living at home, and the phenomenon is growing. Sociologists call them “boomerang kids”—young adults who either continue living at home after high school or college or return to live with their parents after living on their own for a time. The reasons are as varied as the personalities of the kids.

If you’ve suddenly found yourself in a position similar to Tim and Karen’s, you’ve come to the right place. Stephen Bly’s book will help you navigate the sometimes rough waters that families experience when adult children and their parents live in the same household. He’ll teach you how to determine if the living arrangement is a healthy one, how to negotiate appropriate limits and boundaries, and how to determine when it’s time to gently push an adult child “out of the nest.” He’ll also
address difficult issues such as when to evict an adult child because of destructive behaviors. Along the way, he’ll provide you with some key spiritual insights through the parable of the prodigal son.

We hope you’ll find this book to be a helpful resource as you attempt to strike a balance between love and limits in your relationship with your adult child.

Dr. Bill Maier
Vice President, Psychologist in Residence
Focus on the Family
The Crowded Nest: When Adult Children Live at Home
Jason lives down the street and drives a black '65 Corvette that he keeps shined to mirror perfection. Every Friday and Saturday night, he takes the ’vette into the city and cruises 21st Street. To maintain the expense of repairs, insurance, and general upkeep of such a rig, Jason works at odd jobs around town. He house-sits, paints barns, and drives a truck during harvest.

Sounds like an industrious 17-year-old with expensive tastes, doesn’t he?

But Jason is 31 years old and still lives at home with his parents, Matt and Sherry. He has attended seven different colleges, never spending more than a couple of months at any of them. He’s had great jobs, lousy jobs, but mostly no jobs. Matt pays the light bill, the mortgage, and for groceries. Jason, when he has the money, pays for the cable TV.

Five times Jason left home to begin an
independent life; five times he returned. Matt and Sherry sometimes feel resigned, sometimes angry, and sometimes like failures. Often they just feel trapped.

Trisha was a junior in college, living 900 miles from home, when she decided to get married—to a divorced man 10 years her senior. Her parents tried to persuade her to wait until after graduation. They warned her that it would be difficult. They cautioned her about dropping out of school. They described how tough life can be in the big city.

Three years, two children, and countless bruises and black eyes later, Trisha and the kids took the Greyhound bus back to her parents’ house. Dad now pays the bills, and Mom works at the insurance company until noon, then baby-sits the kids. Trisha
returned to college and is working toward a teaching degree. She spends every day at school and every evening doing homework. The nest is more than full—it’s crowded.

Whether our adult children live at home, across town, or across the country, we parents fill a unique role in their lives. Our roles will change and vary with age and circumstances, but we will always be parents. And our job is never finished. In a sense, because we will always be Mom and Dad, we will always be “parenting.”

Up to this point, we have interjected our parenting into our children’s lives in decreasing levels of intensity. But from this point on, we must stop altogether. The adult child must now determine when and where our love, wisdom, and skills are needed.
Few parents nowadays complain about the crisis of an empty nest. Rather, they shudder at the thought that the nest will never become empty. Maybe you’re thinking the same thing, and that’s why you picked up this book. We’ll look at how to handle destructive behavior and when and how to move an adult child out, but we’ll also consider how to make the arrangement work if your child has to live with you awhile longer. This book is about:

- real moms and dads,
- real adult children,
- none perfect,
- and, at times, all in less-than-ideal situations.

A number of interesting acronyms have developed to describe this situation. Maybe what you need at home is PRI—you know, Premarital Residential Independence.¹
Many parents face the dreaded affliction of RYAS—Returning Young Adult Syndrome.²

And then there’s my favorite, ILYA. Some communities are littered with ILYAs—Incompletely-Launched Young Adults.³

Or, in terms you and I can understand, “The kids are still at home! What do I do now?” Or, “Help! Our kids moved back home!”

First, if you have adult children at home, relax! It’s a common phenomenon. According to an article on the Web site SeniorJournal.com:

Twenty-five percent of Baby Boomers anticipate their adult children will move back in with them. Of Boomers polled, 15 percent have grown children
who already returned to the nest. Called “boomerang kids,” this is a growing social phenomenon.

Julie Tillson, 57, a high school teacher and resident of Del Webb’s Sun City Lincoln Hills in Northern California, has experienced the boomerang phenomenon firsthand. After going away to college for several years, her daughter returned home. “Stephanie moved back in with us for three months,” Tillson said. “She needed to because of financial reasons. It was horrible at first. She felt like a failure and it was hard. But by the time she moved out again, we were sorry to see her go.”

Today more than 25 percent of Americans ages 18 to 34 live with their parents, according to U.S. Census fig-
ures. For 18- to 24-year-olds, 56 percent of men and 43 percent of women live with one or both parents. These numbers may increase too. According to a job search Web site, 62 percent of college students say they expect to live at home after graduation.4

Second, if you have adult children at home, don’t apologize for it. It’s not necessarily a sign of failure. Success is not determined by economic good fortune, scholastic achievements, social popularity, or how rapidly or slowly children pull away from their parents.

Why Adult Children Come Home
In recent years, several social factors have contributed to the fact that more and more adult children live at home.
Economics

“Most boom-era parents had the economic winds at their back,” writes Liz Pulliam Weston. “They graduated into a decent job market and enjoyed strong appreciation of their homes and (for the most part) stock portfolios. Today’s graduates, by contrast,

“Our single, 30-year-old daughter moved back home last April. She couldn’t find meaningful work in Denver, after being there for nearly five years, so we didn’t mind having her return. She stays in our basement apartment and pays $300 a month for rent. Yes, we could use the money from a regular tenant, but she is quiet and keeps the place clean. She is working and paying off student loans. I’m happy she has a safe place to stay, but it has been an adjustment.”
are a bit more behind the eight ball: The economy is far from robust, meaning more 20-somethings are unemployed or underemployed. Instead of getting free money in the form of grants to pay for college, they’re taking out student loans—an average of about $20,000 at last count. And then there’s the Demon Credit Card. . . . The median credit card debt for undergraduates has risen by 32 percent since 1998, to $3,730, according to a Nellie Mae study.”5

In some fields, an overabundance of college graduates is applying for a limited number of job openings. This means employers can be selective and demand even more stringent training. That translates into graduate school, spiraling education costs, increased college indebtedness, doubled independent housing expenses, and more kids needing to stay with Mom and Dad . . . just a few more years.
Marriage Deterioration
After years of living in a society where divorce is presented as an agreeable alternative to working through difficult situations, many adult children more quickly jump to divorce or separation as the best solution available. The results of turbulent, broken relationships lead adult children to seek a place that provides security, stability, and acceptance. The natural inclination is to go home.

Frank Furedi, sociology professor at the University of Kent, adds: “In contrast to the insecurities attached to adult relationships, the security of the parental home can appear attractive. In these circumstances, the aspiration of young adults for autonomy can be diminished. Some young adults embrace a delayed phase of dependency, as independence becomes associated with unpredictable risks. . . .
Many young adults who manage to move out of the family home end up constituting a rapidly growing group of singletons. Being single has become a way of life for millions of men and women in their twenties and thirties. . . . In the USA singletons are the fastest growing demographic group.”

The Push toward Quality Careers

Only a few decades ago, most folks were satisfied with a job that paid the bills and provided stability. Now, such employment is touted as inferior. A job must be personally fulfilling. It must challenge the inner person. It must be an extension and expression of your own essence. It must lead to upward advancement. It must be exciting. Careers like that are sometimes hard to find.

Brett spent nine years driving a cement
On his twenty-seventh birthday, he realized he wanted more out of life. He moved back home and is taking art classes at the university. If you ask Brett, he’ll tell about someday having his own studio and gallery. If you talk to his folks, they’ll tell you they don’t have a clue how long Brett will be living with them.

**The Comfort-of-Home Factor**

Let’s face it. Some of us just might be reaping the rewards of our success. We worked hard to make our homes safe, comfortable, relaxed, enjoyable retreats for our children while they grew up in a rather frightening and hostile world. Now that they have reached adult age, some children are in no hurry to abandon the comfort of the world we have created for them.

Nels and Germaine worked hard to fix up the rather run-down home they inher-
ited from Germaine’s parents. By making a lot of sacrifices, they were able to turn the place into a showcase. They added a swimming pool and built a one-room cabana next to it, complete with mini-kitchen, game room, and bathroom.

Their son, Jensen, has been the produce manager at the supermarket for three years. He had supposedly been looking for his own place, but he can’t find anything that compares to the poolside cabana at home. Chances are he never will.

The Extension of Adolescence

“Society has come to accept the idea that people do not become adults until they are in their late thirties. As a result, adolescence has been extended well into the twenties.”

“Anglo-American culture is ambiguous in its response to this development. The occasional outcry against some absurd
manifestation of this trend is drowned out by the powerful message that growing up is a troublesome and unpleasant activity.”

Professor Furedi provides this example: “Fred Simons and Oliver Bailer, both real estate agents in their late twenties, play with their Nintendo and boast that they haven’t changed much since their school years. Helen Timerman, a 27-year-old designer, proudly shows me her collection of soft toys. She loves cuddling them and believes that her little animals, neatly arranged in her bedroom, give her a zone of security.”

**Six Problems to Anticipate When Adult Children Return Home**

Obviously, having adult children move back home won’t always be smooth sailing. But it’s not unrealistic to expect that since it’s your home, you have the right to set
Notes


3. Ibid., 232.


5. Web site: Moneycentral.usa.com/content/collegeandFamily/raisekids/P98891.asp

6. Web site: Spiked-online.com/articles/00000006DE8D.htm

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

It won't be cooked yet. It's Monday morning, so I guess right now Sarah will be taking the children to school. Must and can't.

Must is used to assert what we infer or conclude to be the most logical or rational interpretation of the situation. We do not have all the facts, so it is less certain than will. Must in this meaning is not used to speak about the future. e.g. You say he walked across the Sahara Desert! He must be mad! You must be joking! I simply don't believe you!

The negative of this use is can't. e.g. She can't have a ten-year-old daughter! She's only twenty-one herself! She . . . leave home at eight every morning at present. Notice in a picture gallery: Cameras, sticks and umbrellas be left at the desk. He sees very badly; he . . . wear glasses all the time. I do all the typing at my office. Read unlimited* books and audiobooks on the web, iPad, iPhone and Android.

Cover photo by Stephen Vosloo, copyright Â© by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved. Interior design by Katherine Lloyd, The DESK, Bend, Oregon. Cover design by Erik M. Peterson. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission. Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version,Â® NIV.Â® Copyright Â© 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.Â© Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version. Leaving home for the first time has always been a difficult turning point in life; today the difficulties are perhaps greater than ever before. Click here to show vocabulary guide. (If the vocabulary guide does not show up (some smartphones), see guide at foot of this page). Leaving home is part of the teenage dream. Recently, a survey of “Young People’s Social Attitudes” asked British teenagers for their opinions about leaving home. Forty-nine per cent of 12-15 year olds thought that teenagers should be allowed to leave home at the age of 16; another 12% said 17, and 8% said “when they want”. Often in Britain, it is parents who send their children to make a new home, away from home. At school. These are children who leave home to get married, but then divorce and return to live with their parents. 6 There will be more single-parent families. 7 Because houses are now so expensive, different generations may decide to live together, so parents, grandparents, and adult children may co-own their houses, and many couples will have to live with their in-laws. 1 VOCABULARY & SPEAKING family.

is going out with their brother or sister on Saturday night. is going to have a new nephew or niece soon. is going to leave home in the near future. is going to have a big family reunion soon. isnâ€™t going to go on holiday with their family this year. â–¡ â–¡. 3 READING. a In a family with two children, do you think its better to be the older or the younger brother or sister? Why? Copyright is a type of intellectual property that gives its owner the exclusive right to make copies of a creative work, usually for a limited time. The creative work may be in a literary, artistic, educational, or musical form. Copyright is intended to protect the original expression of an idea in the form of a creative work, but not the idea itself. A copyright is subject to limitations based on public interest considerations, such as the fair use doctrine in the United States.