

## Tips for Growing Apart and Staying Connected

1. Continue to demonstrate nonjudgmental listening, understanding, and interest in the lives of your young adult and his or her partner, if they have one. Letting go and moving apart will require more effort to stay connected, but both parents and young adults will benefit.
2. Never stop expressing and showing unconditional love no matter their actions, their reactions, or the distance between you and them. They need to know they continue to be loved, and you need to be able to express this.
3. If there are unresolved emotions- fear, anxiety, guilt, anger, resentment- let these go. Revisit earlier books on apology and forgiveness to be reminded about how to do this. Life is too short to hold onto the burden of negative emotions that undermine a healthy adult to adult relationship.
4. Take time to step back and examine the extent to which you are making progress on your own development needs and managing the impact of the empty nest, midlife malaise or the generational sandwiched pressures and be sure to tackle these so that you can preserve your relationship with your young adult.
5. Approach the empty nest stage as a time of opportunity, exploration, and experimentation for you individually and your partner if you are married. Dream big, put together your bucket list, go on an adventure, your adult kids will be alright.
6. Use the midlife time when kids have physically left as a time to reinvest in your health and well-being and to dig for a new or deeper purpose in life. Also, a time to reinvent your marriage without the bond you may have had in co-parenting. It may not be easy and feel like you're starting over, but it's worth it. There was a reason you fell in love. Go back and rediscover it.
7. Expand your concept of family to include a larger circle of people- daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren, and other in-laws. Reframe the loss of your nuclear family as an opportunity to experience a wider circle of family members and love.
8. Balance your own needs for privacy, time alone, or time for your marriage while respecting your young adult's similar needs and requirements. Be clear about what you can and will do to support your young adult couple in ways that don't contribute to greater dependency.
9. If your young adult is in a committed relationship, marriage or however that might be defined, be sure to support them as a couple and avoid private conversations with your young adult regarding their partner especially if these are critical. Even said in confidence, there is a good chance your young adult may bring this up with his or her partner, which could jeopardize trust and damage the future of your relationship with that partner. Most of us know the best advice is to "bite your tongue."
10. Transform your relationship with your young adult or young adult couple to that of a good friendship. Offer consultation and advise if asked or, if unsolicited, be sure you couch such consultation with the assurance that it's their decision and you won't be upset if they choose a different path.

For further help with letting go of your young adult, please consider reading *Growing Apart: Letting Go of Our Young Adults* available through this website in ebook or print form.