Are You an Enabling Parent?

The following are a few questions that might help you determine whether you're helping or enabling an adult child.

1. Have you repeatedly loaned your adult child money which has seldom, if ever, been repaid?

2. Have you paid for education and/or job training in more than one field?

3. Have you finished a job or project that he failed to complete himself because it was easier than arguing with him?

4. Have you paid bills he was supposed to have paid himself?

5. Have you accepted part of the blame for his addictions or behavior?

6. Have you avoided talking about negative issues because you feared his response?

7. Have you bailed him out of jail or paid for his legal fees?

8. Have you given him “one more chance” and then another and another?

9. Have you ever returned home at lunchtime (or called) and found him still in bed sleeping?

10. Have you wondered how he gets money to buy cigarettes, video games, new clothes, and such, but can’t afford to pay his own bills?

11. Have you ever “called in sick” for your child, lying about his symptoms to his boss?

12. Have you ever threatened to throw him out but didn’t?

13. Have you begun to feel that you’ve reached the end of your rope?

14. Have you begun to hate both your child and yourself for the state in which you live?

15. Have you begun to worry that the financial burden is more than you can bear?

16. Have you begun to feel that your marriage is in jeopardy because of the situation?

17. Have you noticed growing resentment in other family members because of your child?

18. Have you noticed that others are uncomfortable around you when this issue arises?

19. Have you noticed an increase in profanity, violence, and/or other unacceptable behavior from your adult child?

20. Have you noticed that things are missing from your home, including money, valuables and other personal property?

If you answered yes to several of these questions, changes are that at some point in time you have enabled your adult child to avoid his own responsibilities and to escape the consequences of his actions. Rather than helping him grow into a productive and responsible adult, you have made it easier for him to become even more dependent and irresponsible. If you answered yes to most or all of these questions, you have not only been an enabler, but you have probably become a major contributor to the problem. It's time to stop.

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