

Having a Good Relationship with Your Adult Children, Part 2

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

One glaring behavior that interferes with having good relationships with children 18 and older is when parents give unsolicited advice. I think we all know this, but sometimes it's just hard to stifle ourselves. And sometimes, our innocuous comments may be misinterpreted by our children, especially if we have made this mistake in the past.

Refraining from giving unsolicited advice is especially important if it pertains to your adult child's personal life and choices. This means employment decisions, friend preferences and issues, food choices, personal appearance, plans for future, etc. This covers just about everything, doesn't it?

If your adult child has children, your grandchildren in other words, this caveat still applies. Some parents have mastered not offering gratuitous advice to their adult children only to go off track where grandchildren are involved.

Not only is it best to avoid offering our advice, but we need to think carefully about offering our opinions about our kids' personal lives as well. Opinions often come across as judgments. And, as I've mentioned in this column before, children usually shut down verbally and emotion-

ally if they view their parents as being critical or judgmental.

Example:
Adult child: "Mom and Dad, I'm thinking of buying a condo now that I'm 30. I don't want to keep renting."

Non-recommended responses:
"It's too bad you didn't buy something last year when real estate prices were better."
"Are you sure you can keep up with the payments and utilities? You'll need to be a better money manager."

Positive response:
"That sounds like a good idea!"

Example:
Adult child: "I made an appointment to get a tattoo tomorrow."

Non-recommended responses:
"Why do you want to do something like that?"

"I hope you're getting it somewhere where it won't show."

Positive responses:
"What design are you thinking of getting?"

"You sound excited about this."
Example:
Adult child: "We signed up Evan for preschool next year."

Non-recommended responses:
"We didn't send you until you were 4."

"Won't he get sick more often?"

Positive response:
"Great, tell me about the school."

Another suggestion for

keeping relationships positive with adult children is to continue considering their needs along with your own.

Most parents who have raised their children to adulthood understandably want to finally be able to spend more time pursuing their own interests and activities. This is healthy and important. A problem arises if your adult children, who still may be very dependent on you emotionally but are uncomfortable expressing this, feel somewhat shut out. Your children may feel hurt that they no longer seem to be a priority. At the same time, your children may feel guilty about making demands on your time or bad about themselves to have this need now that they're grown up.

Audrey, age 27, started seeing me to deal with her grief over her mother's death a year earlier. She had been very close to her mom and now felt emotionally adrift. Although she was financially independent and lived with a roommate in a nearby city, Audrey wanted to have a closer relationship with her dad.

Audrey's dad, however, was keeping busy with work, golf, and friends. He didn't initiate contact with Audrey often and seemed content to go for long periods without getting together. He had always been an attentive father

while she was growing up, but he had relied on Audrey's mother to maintain family bonds when Audrey and her two brothers moved out on their own.

We worked on ways for Audrey to increase her outreach efforts with her father and not take it personally that he was busy and didn't consider her as often as she would have liked. After all, when her mother was alive, Audrey didn't extend herself much with her father either. It took time, but gradually Audrey's father responded well to her desire for more contact.

Lastly, what about parents of adult children who miss being a bigger part of their children's lives? We know that using guilt-inducing measures is never a good idea. Neither is complaining to adult children about how we want more from them – attention, thoughtfulness, affection, etc.

This is a time when we need to take our lead from our children and adapt as much as possible to the way they want to lead their lives. We need to try to be good sports and good company when we have opportunities to be together. It helps if we have a positive outlook in general and good listening skills.

It also helps if we can avoid what my mom referred to as "an organ recital." We don't need to dwell on our aches and pains with our

adult children unless there's something serious that needs to be discussed. One client says that his phone conversations with his parents who are in their 60s and live in the Midwest, seem to focus mainly on their health concerns. As a result, he doesn't enjoy talking to them and finds excuses not to talk very long or often.

It's a good idea to try to initiate plans with adult children, especially if you know the activity would interest them. At the very least, food is usually a winner. At the same time be ready to accept no for an answer and react graciously without taking offense. Overall, it helps if we can be sure to look beyond our children to fulfill our needs so that we have other meaningful relationships and activities as well.



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Watermelon contest winner!

Submitted by Masaki Hirayama



Ren Parker, age 9, was declared the winner of the July 4 Moraga Farmers' Market watermelon eating contest. Approximately a dozen children participated in the contest, with the goal for contestants to eat as much watermelon as possible in 90 seconds without using their hands. "Huge thank you to the farmer's market for organizing this fun event that had attendees and participants laughing and smiling," Masaki Hirayama said.



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Orinda teens log over 3,000 volunteer hours amid pandemic

Submitted by Michelle Bea

Despite the stay-at-home orders and restrictions on activities, the Boys Team Charity Orinda TeamMates logged over 3,000 volunteer hours (3,169.5 to be exact) in and around our community during the 2020-21 membership year.

Orinda TeamMates volunteered at a wide range of organizations including White Pony Express, 10,000 Lunches, Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center, Wagner Ranch Nature Center, Monument Crisis Center, and the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano County. At the annual year-end meeting, many of the boys were recognized for their outstanding commitment to volunteering.

Fourteen TeamMates were recognized for earning 25+ philanthropy hours during the League year (Kellen Baker, Nicholas Bea, Brock Bliss, Gio Bottene, Jack Brun, Nico Grinold, Caleb Kreutzer, Ryan Loughran, Kieran McBride, Mitch Reichenbach, Jason Ritchey, Ryan Sinnreich, Bulky Smith, and Nate Zapala) and six earned 50+ philanthropy hours during the League year (Joseph Boccabella, Charlie Burke, Ian Hughes, Luke Lamison, Logan Letulle, and Duncan Oliver).

Kyle Odmark (Class of 2023) was commended for the most philanthropy hours among all the BTC Orinda TeamMates. Kyle earned a total of 103.5 hours including 34 shifts at the

Food Bank of Contra Costa County as well as other volunteer efforts in support of Aegis of Moraga, Special Olympics, and the Monument Crisis Center. Throughout his efforts, he is known among the employees of the food bank as a hard worker who enjoys working quickly, no matter if he is building boxes, sorting fruit, or bagging vegetables.

Rigby Blair (Class of 2021) achieved the highest cumulative philanthropic service hours earned across his six years with BTC Orinda. Rigby earned over 200 cumulative hours, working extensively with Rock Steady Gym. Inspired by his grandfather who had battled Parkinson's disease, he worked as an assistant to the head boxing coach training adults afflicted with Parkinson's. Rigby describes his experience, "In addition to witnessing how the physical and mental engagement helped symptoms, I developed good relationships with some of the regular participants. I am very grateful to have found an organization that I could make a contribution to that was also a place I felt connected to."

In addition to his work with Rock Steady Gym, he also volunteered at various BTC team events such as Grateful Gatherings. "BTC is really great because you get to do your volunteer work with your friends. Kids from multiple high schools became friends from doing those projects together and the other activities."

Community Service: We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

Gold Coast Chamber Players return to the stage in September

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Dian Zhang, and violists Joy Fellow, and Pamela Freund-Stripfen.

"Seriously Mozart" on Jan. 22, 2022 celebrates some of Mozart's late chamber music. Violin Sonata K.454, Piano Trio K.542, and Piano Quartet, K. 478 offer a program that is playful, elegant, and dramatic. Pianist Julio Elizalde makes his Gold Coast debut when he joins violinist Axel Strauss, vi-

olist Pamela Freund-Stripfen, and cellist Jennifer Culp.

As part of the Bay Area Music Consortium, Gold Coast Chamber Players present "Culture, Crisis, and Creativity" on Friday, Feb. 25, 2022 with the Horszowski Trio. Described as "the most compelling American group to come on the scene" by the New Yorker, the ensemble performs Piano Trios by Smetana, Clarke, and Babajan.

"Caliente!" on March 19, 2022 is a sizzling exploration of Spanish favorites featuring San Francisco Opera's principal clarinetist Jose Gonzalez Granero. An eclectic mix of music by Turina, Granados, De Falla, with original compositions for clarinet by Gonzalez Granero offer a dynamic range of Spanish music. Violinists Jennifer Cho and Dian Zhang, and cellist Peter Myers from the San Francisco Opera Orchestra are joined by violist

Pamela Freund-Stripfen and pianist Julie Nishimura.

Completing the season is "Dvořák's America {Reimagined}" on May 14, 2022. GCCP's virtual "Dvořák's America" was so popular that it has been reimagined for the concert stage. "Dvořák's America {Reimagined}" explores the impact of spirituals and Native American music on Dvořák during his time in America. The Alexander String Quartet, soprano

Michele Kennedy, Native American flutist Mary Youngblood, and violist Pamela Freund-Stripfen are featured in this program about the interconnectedness of cultures.

Purchase single tickets and subscriptions online at www.GCCPmusic.com or by calling (925) 283-3728. Visit gccpmusic.com to find regular updates about concert offerings, to make donations, and to purchase tickets.