

# Surviving adult kids

When asked, most baby boomers remember moving out of home at about 18, armed with the second-best dinner set, a couple of old sheets and a few towels. Add some furniture and kitchen accessories from the op shop and you felt that you were all set for the big adventure of being independent.

However, many 18-plus year-olds are still ensconced under the parental roof, especially if they are studying, because moving out with the essential tools of computers, internet access and the necessary rent is financially beyond them.

To survive this stage you need to negotiate boundaries that you and your emerging adults can tolerate. Parents often feel guilty about this. They don't know what is reasonable because it's such new territory.

Many kids will be studying, and may have tried living away from home, only to return when they struggle to pay the rent or cope emotionally. This tendency to come and go keeps parents' empty-nesting plans on hold as they find themselves having to provide continuing support for their adult children.

For many parents it feels as if their kids are moving two steps forward and one step back. It can be frustrating for parents and children, but this phase appears to settle by the time they are about 22 and they start to establish a better sense of direction. So there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Watching your children emerge as adults while still living at home might sometimes call up some vague feelings of jealousy from parents, because the kids seem to have so much more freedom than they did.

All this may be happening while the baby boomers' own parents are ageing and need more support, making them feel squeezed between the needs of both generations.

Don't be afraid to initiate discussions with your emerging adults about what is reasonable to expect from them. It's fine to admit it's not easy for you as parents to adjust to their new state of adulthood.

Parents need to be prepared to balance their own rights with the rights of their young adult children. They also need to realise that doing everything for them is not the way to help them become independent.

Discuss what both sides expect of the other and negotiate some acceptable compromises, and you will all survive this challenging stage.

## Survival tips

- **Realise that between the ages of 18 and 22 a lot of change is still happening**
- **Continuing to do everything for them may make you feel good, but it isn't going to help them become independent adults**
- **Don't feel guilty about setting boundaries**
- **Talk to them as fellow adults to negotiate compromises about lifestyle that you can all live with.**