



SUPPORT WITHOUT TAKING OVER

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WITH ADULT CHILDREN DURING MAJOR LIFE CHANGES

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+ LOVE CAN SUPPORT WITHOUT CONTROLLING

- An adult child may need connection, practical help, encouragement, or a safe place to think while still needing room to make their own decisions.
- Support asks what would help. It respects privacy, autonomy, consent, and the adult child's right to say no.
- Your worry is real; it does not automatically give you responsibility for managing another adult's life.

+ NOTICE THE URGE TO HOVER

- What am I afraid will happen if I do not step in?
- Am I responding to an immediate safety concern, or to uncertainty, discomfort, guilt, fear, or a wish to prevent consequences?
- What feeling do I need to manage with my own supports before I contact my adult child?

+ SUPPORT, RESCUE, OR CONTROL?

- Support: listen, ask permission, offer choices, help with one agreed task, and respect limits.
- Rescue: repeatedly fix consequences or take over tasks the person can reasonably do with appropriate support.
- Control: demand updates, monitor, threaten, contact others without permission, or use money, housing, access, or guilt to force a choice.

+ CULTURE, DISABILITY, AND INTERDEPENDENCE

- Healthy families do not all look the same. Multigenerational living, mutual aid, shared finances, caregiving, and close family involvement may be culturally meaningful.
- Disability or illness may also make ongoing assistance appropriate.
- The key questions are consent, dignity, reciprocity, capacity, safety, and whether help increases support rather than erasing autonomy.



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+ ASK BEFORE HELPING

- "I care about you. Would you like me to listen, help you think through options, or help with one practical task?"
- "Do you want advice, or would it help more if I just listened?"
- "I am available, and I also trust you to make decisions about your life."

+ SUPPORT YOUR OWN NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Use a trusted friend, therapist, support group, cultural or spiritual community, journal, movement, breathing, or another grounding practice rather than making the adult child responsible for calming you.
- Protect their privacy when seeking your own support.

+ SAFETY CHANGES THE EQUATION

- Boundaries do not require ignoring credible immediate danger.
- Imminent self-harm, overdose, violence, inability to maintain basic safety, abuse, or danger to a dependent child may require crisis, medical, emergency, or protective support.
- Concern alone does not automatically justify taking over an adult's life.

+ MY PAUSE PLAN

- What is my early warning sign that I am starting to hover?
- What will I do before contacting them?
- What help am I willing to offer?
- What limit do I need for my own wellbeing?
- When will I check in again, if a check-in is wanted?