

ADULT CHILD DISAPPOINTMENT

BEHAVIORAL DEFINITIONS

1. Heartache that one's offspring lives contrary to the spiritual/religious values and lifestyle taught in the home during the years of rearing.
2. Feelings of failure stemming from observing and realizing the agnostic or atheistic convictions of one's offspring that cause the adult child to reject the teachings and rituals of the church.
3. Grief that the hopes and dreams of traditional courtship, marriage, and grandchildren will not be realized as an adult child reveals an LGBTQ+ orientation.
4. Grief that hoped-for grandchildren will not come to be as adult children announce a plan for a childless marriage.
5. Disappointment and anger as an adult child's addiction to alcohol and/or drugs emerges.
6. Discouragement about the adult child's way of life that is widely divergent from the work ethic, thriftiness, and achievement orientation of the home in which he/she/they were raised.
7. Shame, anger, and disappointment over an adult child's legal, social, and/or vocational irresponsibility.

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. Achieve an attitude of tender, loving concern toward the divergent son or daughter in spite of the disappointment, dismay, or frustration about his/her/their life.
2. Show love and kindness fully and fervently to the adult child, as one would if in total agreement and warm compatibility.
3. Develop a relationship that facilitates learning to understand the adult child in his/her/their alternative way of life.
4. Erase the strong agenda to change the adult child and move toward acceptance even while fundamentally holding a differing outlook on life and grieving the death of your dreams.
5. Maneuver with great care to intrude, interrupt, and intervene where the divergent life is clearly self-destructive or illegal.
6. Entrust the adult child to the care and keeping of a loving God and eliminate all needling, nagging, or nudging for change.

SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

1. Work cooperatively with the counselor toward agreed-upon therapeutic goals while being as open and honest as comfort and trust allow. (1, 2)

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

1. Establish rapport with the client toward building a strong therapeutic alliance; convey caring, support, warmth, and empathy; provide nonjudgmental support and develop a level of trust with the client toward feeling safe to discuss anger control issues and their impact on the client's life.
2. Strengthen powerful relationship factors within the therapy process and foster the therapy alliance through paying special attention to these empirically supported factors: work collaboratively with the client in the treatment process; reach agreement on the goals and

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expectations of therapy; demonstrate consistent empathy toward the client's feelings and struggles; verbalize positive regard toward and affirmation of the client; and collect and deliver client feedback as to the client's perception of his/her/their progress in therapy (see *Psychotherapy Relationships That Work: Vol. 1* by Norcross & Lambert and *Vol. 2* by Norcross & Wampold).

2. Present in detail the scenario causing the grief, heartache, and fear. (3)
3. Express freely the unhappy feelings arising from seeing the adult child living differently from all you had hoped for and believe in. (4)
4. Verbalize acceptance of the need to keep channels of communication open with the adult child who is seen as rebellious or divergent. (5)
5. Terminate statements of failure and self-blame, placing responsibility for behavior choices on the adult child. (6)
6. Verbalize acceptance of the adult child while clearly not agreeing with the disturbing life of the child you raised in a far different way. (7)
3. Explore the cause for the parents' distress being felt over the adult child.
4. Maintain an ideologically neutral but warmly compassionate stance while facilitating a cathartic emotional event centered on the family's feelings of disappointment.
5. Strive to guide the family toward finding a way to keep alive or restore meaningful communication and connectedness with the one regarded as wayward, rather than shunning or condemning him/her/them.
6. Convince the parents that they must not assume responsibility for the lifestyle, values orientation, or addiction of their adult children.
7. Direct the parents toward taking a position of acceptance of the adult child that does not imply agreement with his/her/their way of life.

7. Explore strategies for strengthening or diluting a relationship with the child whose lifestyle is now sharply divergent from your idea of appropriateness, right and wrong, and godly living. (8)
8. Seek God's will as to whether to separate from, or find a way to embrace, the one so far departed from traditional expectations, hopes, and values. (9, 10)
9. Articulate and mourn the loss of dreams and hopes caused by the new and different path followed by the loved one. (11, 12)
10. Earnestly seek from God the wisdom and grace to walk alongside your adult child, giving support, encouragement, and hospitality even while in fundamental disagreement or still in discomfort. (13)
8. Assist the parents in arriving at a decision as to the degree of intensity of the relationship they can maintain with the adult child whose lifestyle is so different.
9. Teach the power of God's patient love (e.g., Luke 15:11–32; Neh. 9:17–20) as the example for our love for others even if their lives are not in agreement with our values.
10. Challenge the parents to endeavor mightily to break down the psychological and emotional barriers preventing them from companionship, love, and hospitality with the adult child in question.
11. Explore the dimension of grief at the core of the parents' unhappiness and assist them through shock, anger, and depression to eventual acceptance, through prayer and willful effort, of the uncontrollable reality.
12. Label the dissonance and upset as due partially to grief; like death, adult child disappointment must be mourned before acceptance of the new reality becomes possible.
13. Understand, support, and encourage the parents while they struggle to balance loving acceptance with basic disagreement with the adult child's lifestyle and/or religious choices.

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| 11. Humbly solicit from God those spiritual gifts needed to be a true and faithful friend to your adult child regardless of the divergence, as long as no line is crossed into amoral behavior or other unrepentant actions damaging of others. (14) | 14. Complement the guidance given with prayer for all that is needed to accomplish this profound move from condemnation, fear, and anger to tender, loving care while continuing to hold the values treasured. |
| 12. Engage in social and recreational activities with the adult child as a means of keeping the relationship strong and lines of communication and indirect influence open. (15, 16) | 15. Encourage the parents to take the initiative to engage in regularly scheduled social and recreational activities with the adult child as a way of demonstrating love, maintaining communication, and providing an indirect positive influence. |
| | 16. Assist the parents in identifying activities they could plan and initiate that would be supportive of the relationship with the adult child. |

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