

# LEARN TO LIVE BULLETIN

*Your guide in wellness and mental health*

## Setting and Maintaining Healthy Boundaries with Young Adult Children

As our children move into young adulthood, many of us find ourselves on an emotional roller coaster. We might worry about their choices, feel hurt by increased distance between us, and frustrated by their continued neediness all at once. As our relationship shifts in profound ways, we may find it hard to know when to step in and when to let go. This transition is normal, but that doesn't mean it's always easy, and one skill that can help us navigate these challenges is learning to set and maintain healthy emotional boundaries.



To understand what we mean by *boundaries*, imagine that each of us has our own personal “bubble” wrapped around us. Inside that bubble lives all our thoughts, opinions, beliefs, preferences, emotions, and actions. Every time we interact with another person, our two bubbles come together, and the space between our bubbles is what we call the boundary. In some relationships, it might feel like that space keeps us too far apart, like with a child who only shares polite updates but never anything deeper with her parent. In other relationships, our bubbles may be so close that they overlap causing one person to feel like the other is trying to fix, influence, or manage them.

In our relationships with our young adult children, when our boundaries leave too much distance between us, it can leave us feeling lonely and disconnected. However, if we allow our bubbles to overlap without any boundary between us, our child may feel smothered and controlled while we may exhaust ourselves trying to fix problems that aren't ours to fix. A healthier approach is to pursue closeness without overlap: a relationship that is warm, supportive, and connected while still acknowledging that each person must maintain ownership of their own bubble (their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, preferences, emotions, and actions).

When we choose this kind of relationship – one where our bubbles are close but not overlapping – we have the opportunity to do a few important things. First, we practice accepting that our young adult children are individuals with their own bubbles. Second, we give ourselves permission to set limits to support our own emotional well-being. And finally, we can have honest, collaborative conversations with our adult children. And remember, healthy boundaries aren't walls – they're respectful distances between personal bubbles that make meaningful connection possible in a changing relationship.

## Get Started Today

Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries won't eliminate every twist and turn of the emotional rollercoaster, but it can help smooth the ride. You can learn more about managing this season of transition, including more information on boundaries and other tools in our webinar: [Assertiveness and Boundaries](#). And if the challenges of this transition are weighing more heavily on your own well-being, consider taking a quick mental health assessment or starting one of our programs. You can do this by scanning or visiting [learntolive.com/partners](https://learntolive.com/partners) and entering access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

