

homeroom

MARRIAGE & FAMILY MENTORING MEMBERSHIP

# HOW TO AIM AT YOUR ADULT CHILDREN

## ACTIVATION GUIDE



## **We have a cultural obsession with making things kid-friendly instead of intergenerationally-friendly.**

This has created a whole world that kids are immersed in that may be fun for them but is quite different from the adult world. In fact, one of the main reasons for this obsession is so adults can live and play without having to worry about distractions and difficulties that naturally come with integrating children.

So what are some practical ways we can parent toward raising adult team members instead of simply managing children? Here are ten ideas we have tried. Some will be more accessible to your family than others, so pick what may work for you and ignore what does not. We want to get you thinking how parenting young kids can look different when it's directed at how their life and the family team look when they reach maturity.

# 10

## Cast the future vision of working together as a team as your goal.

Because most families expect to diverge as soon as the children reach maturity, it can be challenging to picture how your relationship will look when your kids are older. Some places to find these pictures are:

- Seeing a grandmother supporting her daughter with her kiddos
- Seeing a mother or father working with their adult children in a family business
- Seeing a mother or father working as a team in ministry or mission with their adult kids
- Movies, books, and TV series where the generations stay connected and work together



When you see these pictures, point them out.

*“I can’t wait until we get to do these kinds of things together.”*

Our goal here is not make the picture too high resolution where our kids may feel trapped. This is all about being invitational toward our kids.

They need to sense, *“I love you and even though I don’t know when, how, or exactly what this will look like, I’m excited for when you become an adult and we can get to do productive things together as a team!”*

# 09

## Keep the emotional baggage low.

I'm convinced that many ways moms and dads thoughtlessly hurt their children would be avoided if they realized those emotional time bombs will go off when their kids become adults. Fits of rage, emotional manipulation, and careless words are all ways of eroding the deep relationship you'll want to have with your kids when they are adults. So don't do things to your child you wouldn't do to an adult you respect and with whom you want to have a long-term relationship.

# 08

## Put roots down in a place where your adult kids will want to work and live.

When your kids are really little, it's fairly easy to find the basic things they'll need in most anyplace you want to live. Access to a Christian community, to educational opportunities, and to all the basic necessities can be found in almost any remote place. But keep in mind that, as your child grows, their needs grow, and when they become adults they may want to stay near you but feel forced to uproot in order to use their gifts and seek their calling in a wider space.

Now, this can happen no matter where you live if God has a call on your child's life that involves something very specific far from your home. However, most kids have a more general calling that can be experienced and explored if they are close enough to any major city. This is one reason why we chose to move from the country to a home 15 minutes from a city as our kids started to become teens.

We were ready to put down serious roots, but we wanted to increase the likelihood that our kids would not feel they had to move just to find basic opportunities that aligned with their Kingdom calling or ways to make a decent income to provide for their branch of the family.



# 07

## Immerse your kids in your adult world and give them a place within it.

This looks different for every person. When our kids begin to feel at home in the work world of adults, it gives them a picture of what their life could look like working alongside their parents in the future.

When my oldest daughter was about 10 years old I helped her start a pop-up coffee shop in our office, and for 3 hours every week she would walk around and take orders from my co-workers selling drinks and muffins.

When my third daughter began to be interested in art, I'd bring her to work one afternoon a week to shadow different designers in our business. Work environments are not built for children so this always takes creativity and intentionality. Some of my experiments at integrating my kids into work environments were unsuccessful but over time I found ways for them to fit.

Today almost all of my work projects involve either working with my wife or my adult kids. But this started by laying the groundwork when they were young.

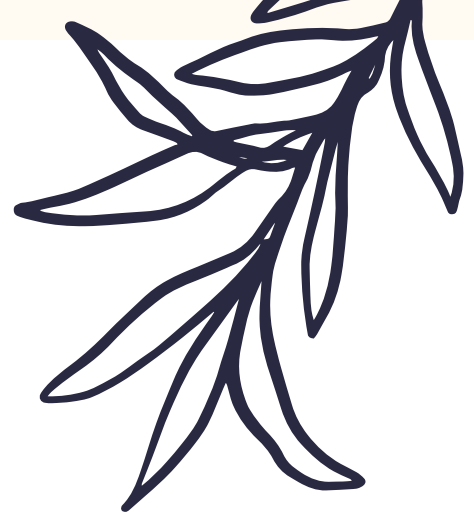
# 06

## Pay attention anywhere you see mothers or fathers working with their adult children.

This is rare today, but in the course of my work I run across this dynamic once or twice a year, and when I do I jump on the opportunity to have a discovery conversation.

Ask practical questions and have them tell you their story of how this evolved.

Often they'll say it happened by accident, and that is likely true. We don't live in a culture any longer that pursues this, but as you have these conversations you'll discover patterns that will help you take what is accidental and make it intentional.



# 05

## Pay attention to where your career trajectory will likely put you when your kids become working adults.

Some careers get more demanding as you get into your late 40s and 50s. This can be great for income but rough on building a multigenerational family. I want to have enough time freedom when my kids begin to work to find gateways into partnership. If I'm working 60 hours per week with heavy responsibilities this can be hard.

This is why we've worked to transition from employment to ownership over the past two decades.

But if you have a demanding career as an employee there is a way you can sometimes force this to work to your advantage. When you have a high position you can often use that leverage to insist on family integration as one of the conditions of giving your focus to this entity. I know of some executives, for example, who have insisted that every trip includes the expenses needed to bring another family member along.

# 04

## Strategize with your kids as early as possible.

Involve your kids in strategic problem solving.

For us, this started in the home during our weekly family meeting. We would try to solve one problem happening in the home every week and work together to come up with creative solutions.

Our annual summit is also a place where this happens in our family. Around the age of 8, kids can begin to really engage in this kind of problem solving and their ability gets better and better as they get older.

This helps them see that their voice is heard and the family team is a natural place where they can add real value.

# 03

## Make alliances with other families.

As you and your kids become friends with other families, building deeper friendships and business or ministry partnerships communicates to your kids that we function as a team.

These deeper connections with other families help expand your kids' network from the family out instead of only being centered away from the family.

This centering will make integrating much easier.

Our family friends are where our adult kids find many of their partnerships today, and the reverse also happens. As our kids form alliances with other families we don't currently know, we go out of our way to build relational bridges with those families.



# 02

## Pass on ownership and responsibility to your kids early in their adulthood.

Perhaps nothing gives the idea of inheritance a worse name than when we wait until death and a will to pass on strategic assets to our kids.

Whatever you want to give your kids as a heritage, be it spiritual or material, you want to dole out in stages early in their adulthood when you can help them learn to steward the family assets.

# 01

## Demonstrate to your kids that home and family is where you want to be most of all.

When, through our actions, we communicate to our kids that the real realm of our life is outside the family, they'll likely follow suit.

But when we demonstrate that our work life is nested in the efforts of the household and exists to serve the family, this helps our kids see life as centered on home.

We need to make our homes places of celebration and integration.

When we prioritize our family rhythms and design them in a way that everyone enjoys them most, it becomes hard for outside identities to capture our hearts in an unhealthy way.

When a child sees both parents love family and home life, they will want to create that center as they get married and have kids, and this will lead to many more opportunities to integrate with your adult children.



**Hopefully you found something  
in that list that is helpful or  
actionable.**

**Take one thing and discuss with your  
spouse how to practically implement this  
lesson in your family.**

