

Dr. Kathy McCoy

Q & A: Family Dynamics



Q. What are some unique problems families have today?

A. There are several that I frequently see in my therapy practice:

- The nest that won't empty: Many grown children live at home longer or return to the nest after college, a job loss, or divorce.
- Family members in need but at a distance, whether aging parents or college student on their own but in crisis.
- Too much connectivity but not enough connection: Family members may text through dinner or talk on the phone to others while in the car—both previously great times for parents and kids to talk.
- Too little time together to relax and just hang out together—everyone is so busy. Families need to plan “together time.”

Q. What question do you hear the most from parents?

A. “How can I improve my relationships with my adult children?” This is asked from several perspectives, including: parents who want to maintain closeness without interfering with their grown children's lives and relationships; parents who are often in conflict with an adult child; and parents who are experiencing estrangement or semi-estrangement from a son or daughter.

Q. If you're an estranged adult child, how do you begin to reconnect?

A. Realizing your part in the relationship disconnection and taking a step to change interactions on your end is a good way to begin. For estranged adult children it may mean acknowledging that, while your parents may have caused you pain, they also loved and nurtured you as much as they were able. It's important to your own sense of well-being to work through your complicated feelings of love and pain and to take responsibility for your own life and happiness.

Q. Any advice for parents who are in constant conflict about the kids?

A. Take time with each other or with a family therapist to sort out your parenting issues. Don't argue or undermine each other in front of the kids. It's vital to children's sense of security and personal growth to have parents united in family decision-making.

Q. How can one build family closeness?

A. By making time for each other. Time is the most precious commodity. What do you remember most fondly from your childhood? Probably not the birthday gifts or vacations, but the sweet and ordinary times with grandparents, parents, and extended family members.

Dr. Kathy McCoy is an award-winning author, a journalist and a blogger as well as a psychotherapist. Her book, *We Don't Talk Anymore*, is available at Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.