

## *Difficulties Seniors Face when Dealing with Adult Children who Mean Well*

You love your children, you value the special relationship you have with them. It seems like yesterday that they were young and you were teaching them how to read and write, how to handle the challenges that every child faces as they navigate growing up. And then one day they're adults, with their own family, and they're making their own decisions. A few more years pass, you begin to face some challenges yourself, and it feels like role reversal, your adult children begin to make decisions for you. So have you really changed roles, have you really become the child? Absolutely not!

I've written numerous articles pertaining to the challenges adult children have when their parents encounter physical and cognitive difficulties. How can they do what's right for their parents and how to have difficult conversations about unwanted change.

Recently a lovely woman suggested that I should write about how seniors can communicate and deal with their adult children. How they can cope with the feeling of becoming a child to their children. Note I said "feeling" of becoming a child to their children. That's the key.

Your adult children know you were once a child, but they've never experienced you at that stage of life. They know you as mom and dad, and maybe as grandma and grandpa. Both of those roles denote certain levels of experience and influence in their lives. So when they suddenly begin to see those they love falter, when they see health setbacks take a toll, when they see this person who's always taken care of them needing a little assistance themselves, their first instinct is to take charge, to do for

their loved one what they've always done for them. It's the least they can do.

It is in those transitional moments that adult children may act before they think. And therein lies the disconnect. Here are a few words of advice I've gleaned from some of my senior clients experiencing similar feelings. See if their words resonate with you.

- I don't like the idea of needing your help. I enjoy being with you, I appreciate that you're willing to do things for me, but your taking over because you think you should doesn't feel honoring. I know your intentions are good, but it makes me "feel" even less independent.
- When you're doing things for me, I feel guilty because I know you have such a busy life. If I thought that you enjoyed doing those things for me, or that there was some gain for you, it would make me feel less of a burden. (I once heard a son express it this way to his mother; "Mom, I enjoy spending time with you, and it makes me feel useful when I'm able to do things for you. It's easy for me to do, I'd appreciate it if you'd let me.")
- As my health has begun to fail I move a bit slower. It takes me longer to get ready and that causes my children to get impatient with me at times. I know they love me, and I appreciate their willingness to take me places when they have so many other things to do. But their frustration causes me anxiety and that's when our relationship gets strained. I wish it wasn't so.

*cont'd*

If you've had similar thoughts, I suggest you consider sharing them with your loved ones. They want to do the right thing, and most of them don't read minds! Give them, and yourself, the gift of understanding one another. It's all about communication.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by Adele Lund, Laureate Group's Director of Community and Business Relations*