



Letting Them Grow . . . Or Stay



[1]A "reality" show on television centered on a boy, recently graduated from college, who returns to live in his parents' home. He tells the audience he is doing so because "it's so easy." He loves that he doesn't have to pay rent, has no responsibilities, and his mother makes his lunches! His mother is glad to have the prodigal son home and happy to wait on him hand-and-foot. His step-father is no so happy, especially after encountering the young man and a few of his friends, drunk, in the kitchen at 3:00 in the morning, making a mess, and enjoying all the spoils of the fully packed refrigerator. Both wanted to provide a safe setting for next steps.

Before addressing the son, specific behaviors and how to deal with them became a discussion topic between the parents. The mother supported the arrangement as "security" for the son; a place for him to feel protected and safe while he transitioned into the next phase of his life. The dad expressed his concern that the mother was laying out this security blanket because of her fears about her son leaving the home nest. **He thought that maybe she wanted to protect her boy from the hurt and anguish of not having or finding a job and not building a life after college. The dad saw the boy as too free of cares and was in favor of letting the boy face the world to "sink or swim."**

Achieving or enhancing security, however, may look different depending on our definitions and perspectives. Like the mother on television, security may mean protection from all possible threats or inconveniences. Like the dad, it might mean building strength and capacity for coping with challenges that arise. **What does it mean to you to feel safe and protected? Is this feeling supplied by forces outside you or from within? Does it vary?**

In *Personal Safety Nets®: Getting Ready for Life's Changes and Challenges*, we show how "security" is enhanced through practicing certain skills in connection with others. **This type of security focuses upon resiliency and resourcefulness - building a community (safety net) to help you face problems and opportunities.** So while the mother and dad discussed whose meaning would take priority, they and the son might be better served by addressing the situation as a learning opportunity. **The son must be reminded (or taught) that his family cannot provide the only security he'll need to move onto the next chapter of his life. He needs to see this as a time to create a plan for extending out to others for the next opportunity or change in his life.** If he learns to do it now, he will know how to do it whenever situations change or evolve.

Maybe you, or someone you know, is facing a similar situation. It's wonderful that graduation is all around us, but before that graduate settles into a summer (or more) of fun and relaxation, **maybe the best gift you can offer is to help that graduate learn to recognize and use the personal resources that abound - because enhancing connections with others will pay more in the long run than a month of free lunches!**



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