Holding On and Letting Go: Developing Independence in Your Teen and Young Adult Child

Michelle S. Alkon
Coordinator of Adult Services, AANE
michelle.alkon@aane.org
617.393.3824 ext. 25
• Introductions
• 4 stories
• If you’ve met one, you’ve met one…
• What’s a mother (or father) to do
• Discussion
• Introduction

• How old is your child?
  - Younger than age 14
  - 14-17
  - 18-22
  - Over age 22
Sheldon grows up

it's okay to be smarter than everybody.

©Asperger/Autism Network
• AS is a developmental delay.
• People with AS learn explicitly what neurotypicals learn intuitively.
• At age 18, adults with disabilities are still adults with the same rights (and responsibilities) as other adults.
• “When you’ve met one person with Asperger Syndrome—you’ve met one person with Asperger Syndrome!”

Stephen M. Shore, Ed.D.  
Author, Professor, Musician, Adult on the Autism Spectrum

©Asperger/Autism Network
• It’s a process
• It doesn’t end
So What’s a Parent to Do?

Build Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy
Build Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy

• Successful adults are able to understand the issues that are problematic for themselves and to respond appropriately.

• Parents need to help their transitioning adults to understand the nature of their challenges and the kinds of supports that they require.
Build Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy

- Strategic Partial Disclosure

So What's a Parent to do?
Build Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy

• Denial and Disclosure
Build Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy

• “Nothing About Us, Without Us!”  

©Asperger’s Association of New England
Poll #2

How would you describe the role you play in your child’s life right now:

- Helicopter parent doesn’t begin to describe it
- I check in every day and do his/her laundry
- It’s a balancing act- reaching out and holding back
- I’m there when s/he calls
- There is no room for me in my child’s life

©Asperger/Autism Network
Hire a “disinterested third party”

• Bring in the professionals: life skills coaches, employment consultants, academic supports

• Preserve the parental relationship
Hire a “disinterested third party”

• Example:

©Asperger/Autism Network
Explicit instruction in life skills

• Teaching by Modeling
• Talking/showing/doing

©Asperger/Autism Network
Explicit instruction in life skills

• Example:

• Repeat for cooking, cleaning, paying bills, refilling prescriptions
Respect the Adult

- Once he is over 18 he is technically an adult.
- Consult with the individual on preferences and perspectives.
So What’s a Parent to Do?

Respect the Adult

• If the individual is able to do something herself, allow her to do it herself.
Respect the Adult

- Example:
Respect the Adult

• Example:
So What’s a Parent to Do?

• Respect the Adult

Example:
Balance Rights and Responsibilities

So What’s a Parent to Do?
Balance Rights and Responsibilities

- Prepare your child for adult life experientially, not theoretically.

So What’s a Parent to Do?
Balance Rights and Responsibilities

- Create opportunities for your adult child to build skills around adult living and independence.
- Contributing to the household
- Reasonable standard

So What’s a Parent to Do?
Balance Rights and Responsibilities

So What’s a Parent to Do?
So What’s a Parent to Do?

Build Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy

Hire a “Disinterested” Third Party

Teach by Modeling

Respect the Adult

Balance Rights and Responsibilities

©Asperger/Autism Network
Do Not push the baby bird out of the nest

Support, Prepare, Train, Practice

Contact AANE
Questions and Discussion