

Are You Enabling Your Adult Child? Six Steps to Regain SANITY

Allison will enlighten your audience by sharing:

Ten ways to break the cycle of enabling

The difference between helping and enabling—and why it matters

Her own personal story as an enabling parent and how it's led her to reach out to others

Why we can't "fix" our kids—but can fix ourselves

What to do if your adult child struggles with addiction

Six Steps to SANITY

How to let go of your kids while still loving them

How to identify if you're a "helicopter parent"

CBS News calls them "Boomerang Kids," young adults who left the nest to make their way in the world, but who are now moving back home (either physically or emotionally) to mom and dad. It can happen just when a parent thinks they have graduated from parenting.

But what if it's worse than just an inconvenience? What if the returning adult child brings their bad habits, life choices, and a trunk full of extra baggage that threatens the emotional and

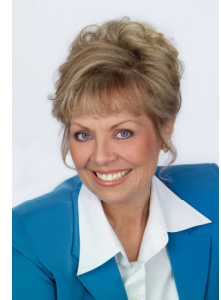
financial well being of an otherwise loving parent? What if the adult child has never left home?

In an era when personal accountability has become more and more scarce, it's often the parents who have spent years enabling their children who are now suffering. Feelings of guilt, shame, fear, anger, frustration and the inability to trust our adult children invade our existence. How do these feelings play into the dynamic of not only accepting, but in some cases encouraging negative behavior in adult children?

In ***Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children*** by Allison Bottke (Harvest House, February), parents will learn not only to recognize the negative behavior of their adult children, but more important, their own negative responses as well—responses that will need to be altered before change can occur.

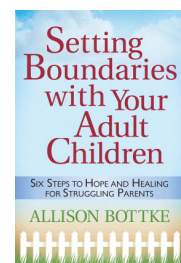
Having experienced first-hand the enabling of her own adult child, Allison speaks out to parents and grandparents about her own personal journey, identifying and overcoming the lies that kept her and ultimately her son in bondage. Additional real life stories from other parents are woven throughout.

A tough-love book to help readers cope with dysfunctional adult children, ***Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children*** will empower families by offering hope and healing through S.A.N.I.T.Y.—a six-step program to help parents regain control in their homes and in their lives.



About Allison Bottke

Allison Bottke has experienced firsthand the rollercoaster of chaos that results from enabling an adult child. Bottke is the general editor of the popular God Allows U-Turns® series, the God Answers Prayer series, and has written or edited over 23 non-fiction and fiction books, including six books for children and youth. She is in frequent demand as a speaker and has been featured in *Guideposts Magazine*, on *The 700 Club*, *Decision Today*, and numerous other radio and television programs.



Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children

by Allison Bottke

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Meet Allison Bottke

Allison Bottke is an inspirational writer, speaker, and workshop leader who uses her story of triumph over tragedy to encourage others to accept the life-transforming power of God. At the age of 35, she traded a destructive lifestyle marred by early childhood abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, and emotional turmoil for a life in Christ and the healing that only God can bring.

Raised by a single mother in the projects of Cleveland, Ohio, Bottke ran away from home at age 15 and married a man whose abuse nearly killed her. She gave birth to a son, escaped through divorce, and signed up for welfare as a single mom—all by the age of 16. Bottke went on, however, to earn her GED and become a successful non-profit fundraising executive and the first plus-size model signed by the Wilhelmina Agency in Los Angeles. But she found that the allure of work, alcohol, drugs, New Age beliefs, and relationships couldn't fill the emptiness within. Life was spinning out of control when she followed strangers into a neighborhood church in 1989. There she heard a sermon that spoke so intimately of her circumstances and how God could heal her pain, that she surrendered her life to Christ.

Since founding the God Allows U-Turns outreach ministry in 2000, Bottke has written or compiled over 23 books, including *God Answers Prayers*, *God Answers Mom's Prayers*, and *God Answers Prayers—Military Edition*. She also wrote an adult compilation series featuring *God Allows U-Turns—The Choices Women Make* and *The Choices Teens Make*. Bottke's contributions in the "boomer lit" genre include her second novel, *One Little Secret*, and the *VA VA VA BOOM* series, a trilogy to be released in 2009. Her book, *I Can't Do it All*, was published in 2006 and coauthored with best-selling author Tracie Peterson and Dianne O'Brian.

Bottke shares the message closest to her heart in her new book, *Setting Boundaries With Your Adult Child*. Having experienced firsthand the rollercoaster of chaos that results from enabling an adult child, Bottke speaks to parents and grandparents about her own personal journey, identifying and overcoming the lies that kept her—and ultimately her son—in bondage. In this landmark book, parents will learn not only to recognize the negative behavior of their adult children, but more importantly, their own negative responses as well—responses that will need to be altered before change can occur.

The 700 Club featured Bottke's life story in one of its highest rated programs ever and she is a frequent guest on national radio and television programs such as *Living the Life*, *The Harvest Show*, *Aspiring Women*, *Celebration*, and *At Home Live!* In addition, she has appeared nationally on the covers of *Writer's Digest*, *BOND*, *Christian Women Online*, *O.H. Magazine*, and *The Christian Communicator*.

A member of the prestigious Advanced Writers and Speakers Association, Bottke is scheduled to speak and lead workshops at a number of upcoming retreats and seminars including Jerry Jenkins' Christian Writers Guild Conference. Bottke lives in a suburb of Dallas with her husband Kevin.

Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children by Allison Bottke

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Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children

Close-up with Allison Bottke

Q. Why do you think so many parents struggle with letting go?

A. We don't understand the difference between helping and enabling, that one heals and the other hurts. We don't realize that we handicap our adult children when we don't allow them to experience the consequences of their actions.

Q. What is the difference between helping and enabling?

A. Helping is doing something for someone that he is not capable of doing himself. Enabling is doing for someone things that he could and should be doing himself.

An enabler is a person who recognizes that a negative circumstance is occurring on a regular basis and yet continues to enable the person with the problem to persist with his detrimental behaviors. Simply, enabling creates an atmosphere in which our adult children can comfortably continue their unacceptable behavior.

Q. What are some of the most common ways that parents enable their children?

A. Being *The Bank of Mom and Dad*, or *The Bank of Grandma and Grandpa*. Loaning money that is never repaid, buying things they can't afford and don't really need. Continually coming to their rescue so they don't feel the pain—the consequences—of their actions and choices. Accepting excuses that we know are excuses—and in some instances are downright lies. Blaming ourselves for their problems.

Q. Why are you so passionate about reaching out to other parents?

A. I've been there. I'm a parent who has traveled this painful road of enabling. For years I really thought I was helping my son. I wanted him to have the things I never had growing up. I love my son, and I didn't want him to hurt—but sometimes pain is a natural result of the choices we make. For a long time I didn't understand the part I was playing in the ongoing drama that had become my son's life—I didn't understand that I didn't have to live in constant chaos and crisis because of his choices. When I chose to stop the insanity and start living a life of hope and healing my life changed. It's a feeling I want other struggling parents and grandparents to experience. I want other parents to know that change is possible when we choose to stop the destructive cycle of enabling. ***And we can stop it. I know, because I've done it.***

Q. What are some things that parents can do to break the cycle of enabling?

A. Stop blaming yourself and stop the flow of money. Stop continually rescuing your adult children from one mess after another. Assemble a support group of other parents

in the same situation. Nip excuses in the bud. Implement rules and boundaries. Trust your instincts. Yield everything to God, because you're not in control. These six things can start a parent on the road to S.A.N.I.T.Y. in an insane situation that is spinning out of control. ***However, a key issue in breaking the cycle of enabling is to understand whose problem it really is.***

Our biggest problem isn't about our adult child's inability to wake up when their alarm clock rings, or their inability to keep a schedule, or their inability to hold down a job or pay their bills. It's not about their drug use or alcohol addictions. It's not about the mess they're making of their life. The main problem is about the part we're playing in stepping in to soften the blow of the consequences that come from the choices they make. *The main problem is us.* Instead of praying to God to stop the pain, remove the difficulty, or change the life of our adult child, we must rise up and pray for something entirely different. We must pray for the courage to look deep in our own heart and soul—pray for the strength to begin a journey that quite possibly may change our own life—and *pray for the wisdom to make new choices in our own life.*

Quotables from *Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children* By Allison Bottke

On Enabling...

- As long as we continue to keep enabling our adult children, they will continue to deny they have any problems, since most of their problems are being “solved” by those around him. Only when our adult children are forced to face the consequences of their own actions—their own *choices*—will it finally begin to sink in how deep their patterns of dependence and avoidance have become. And only then will we as parents be able to take the next step to real healing, forever ending our enabling habits and behaviors. (33)
- Many of our adult children have retreated from the trials and tribulations that not only test their faith but would also stretch them in ways that would develop their character, prove their mettle, and give them a sense of achievement. Consequently, many adult children have no idea what they’re truly capable of accomplishing. They’ve never really tried to move ahead with confidence and be all they can be. (35)

On Letting Go...

- It’s a natural instinct to protect those we love, to help someone when he’s down, to offer assistance during times of tribulation. Yet for some adult children, “tribulation” is their middle name. When is enough enough? Our adult children are no longer babies, toddlers, or adolescents. We must stop treating them as such. Gone are the years of trying to mold their character. Unless they decide to change as a result of changes we make (if we truly want this to stop), what we see is what we get, as the saying goes. (43)
- Setting our adult children free to live the lives God intended them to live is *not* abandonment—even if it means setting them free during a time of severe trial and tribulation in their lives. (57)
- Our money must cease being the life preservers that buoy up our adult children, keeping them afloat through yet another storm. We might be amazed at just how well our adult children can swim when giving the opportunity to do so. More important, they just might be surprised at their own ability to survive without life support, a powerful lesson that no amount of money can purchase. (107)

On Healing and Restoration...

- We do not parent as those who have no hope. We have a God who watches over our children—if we’ll just get out of His way and let Him do the restoring. Restoration is such a promising word to parents in pain. But to get to restoration, we must start with the truth of where we are. We must be honest. The truth is that those once-innocent children grew into the jaded and unmotivated adults they are today under our parental watch. And now we find that one huge step in the restoration process is to honestly see our adult children for who they really are *now*, not as we remember them in their Kodak moments. (72)
- Real healing begins when a parent stops believing the excuses and lies and insists on the truth. As we develop our action plan, there must be no room for excuses. Our

boundaries must be firm. There is a right and there is a wrong, and we are going to choose to do what's right. Period. (118)

- Healing often comes through pain first. Physical therapy is painful, but it's always conducted for our own good. So too are God's plans always meant for our good—even when we can't understand them. (172)
- We should never give up hope that our adult children will find a way out of the dark abyss of addiction. We should never stop encouraging them, emotionally supporting them, and loving them. And we should never stop praying for them. Miracles happen every day, and God will make a way where there seems to be no way. (189)

On Listening...

- As parents in pain, we've been living in places of weakness for a very long time, but we haven't done the kind of listening that has brought us closer to God—or to any firm results in the challenges of our lives. We have become emotional repositories for everyone else's problems, and the time has come for that to stop. (132)
- Rarely in our prayers do we think about listening to God or about implementing the biblical principles that will bring stability to our lives. Instead, we fall back on bargaining. But I've discovered that listening to what God teaches us in His Word about all things—parenting included—should be the number-one goal in the life of every Christian. Too often we listen instead to worldly advice, to secular self-help gurus, and to the never-ending stream of trendy cultural messages designed to fix whatever ails us. Ironically, those were often the very sources of “wisdom” that either caused us to make parenting mistakes or caused our children to succumb to temptations that led them into their destructive lifestyles. (144)

14 Suggested Discussion Questions for Allison Bottke

1. This book comes out of your own personal experience with your son. Please tell us about that.
2. When did you first realize there was a difference between helping and enabling?
3. What are the six steps for hope and healing you refer to in *Setting Boundaries*?
4. You say that enabling our children is “a nationwide epidemic with catastrophic consequences.” What has led you to believe this?
5. Is there a specific reason you feel we have become a nation of enabling parents? Is there something we can pinpoint as the reason things have gotten so out of control?
6. How can we determine whether we are helping versus enabling our children?
7. How can parents of young children start a pattern early on of helping—not enabling—their kids?
8. You say the main problem with dysfunctional adult children isn’t the choices they make or don’t make—but something else entirely. If their choices aren’t the main problem, what is?
9. What are some concrete tools parents or grandparents can use to stop the crippling epidemic of enabling?
10. If people refuse to set boundaries with their adult children, where will that decision ultimately lead?
11. Is *Setting Boundaries* applicable to readers who may not share the same faith journey as you?
12. The Bible teaches that God can work all things together for good. How did He use your past to launch your ministry...and this book?
13. Tell us about the Sanity Support Group Network you founded. How can people get involved?
14. How is your son doing today, and what does he think of this book?

Setting Boundaries for Your Adult Children
By Allison Bottke

Looking for a program idea? Consider these...

- Four Life-Saving Truths about Changing Enabling Behavior
- Eleven Ways Parents Enable Their Adult Children (44)
- Top-Ten Ways to Break the Enabling Cycle (59)
- Ten Steps to Living Your Own Life—Free From Enabling (66)
- Five Areas of Forgiveness When Setting Boundaries (86)
- Four Critical “Stop Steps” to End the Insanity (104)
- Seven Steps to Developing an Action Plan to Stop Enabling (162)
- Are You a Helicopter Parent? How to Kick Your Hovering Habit (193)
- Raising Your Grandchildren: What to do When Your Child Isn't the Ideal Parent (195)