
The Boomerang Generation: More Twentysomethings Living with Mom and Dad

It's no secret that parents who send their kids off to college or into the workforce are known as "empty nesters." After focusing their energy and efforts on raising children for nearly two decades, it can be a challenging transition to a childfree lifestyle. While some parents are excited about becoming empty nesters and others are more hesitant, there are a growing number of baby boomers who are discovering that "nest" is not as empty as they had expected.

In recent years, an increasing number of twentysomethings are choosing to move back home. In fact, a recent Monster.com survey found that 60 percent of college graduates plan to move back home right after graduation. While many recent graduates will only stay for a few months, others will return to the nest for a lot longer. Another study found that for those between the ages of 25-and 34-years-old, ten percent are still living with mom and dad. Think about that for a moment: One out of ten young adults is living with their parents.



The result is a growing number of baby boomer parents who are adjusting their lives, families, and homes to accommodate their adult children, and sometimes even their adult child's spouse and/or pet. Parents are turning their son or daughter's room (who likely just graduated from college or landed a job) into the new sewing room, office, or workshop; then finding they're having to redesign the spare room back into a bedroom for their twentysomething child to move back home.

In fact, according to the annual Kids Count Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, about 3.8 million youth between the ages of 18 to 24 are neither in school or the workforce. Dubbed "non-engaged" or "lost," this segment represents approximately 15 percent of all the people in this age.

The result is a generation often struggling to find their place in this world and moving back in with mom and dad in order to figure it out. For some, moving back in with their parents is a way to survive a rather stormy economy until a solid job opens up. For others, it's an opportunity to gain a more solid financial footing before launching out on their own. And still for others, it's a safe place to hide from real world responsibilities. Sometimes it's hard to tell what factors are at the core of a person moving back in with mom and dad. But in the end, why they're there isn't as important as how they handle themselves and their time back in the nest.

It's important to encourage young adults to communicate with their parents about the living situation as soon as they move in. Are they responsible for any rent? Are they expected to contribute to the utility or grocery bills? What are the expectations for chores and helping around the house? Challenge young adults to keep the communication lines open with their parents.

If appropriate, consider addressing the issue of what it means to honor your parents as an adult. What responsibilities does a twentysomething have to honor their parents? How do you honor your parent through your attitudes and actions-whether or not you're living with them? What are the healthy boundaries between parents and their adult children?

It's also important to help young adults establish boundaries and a plan for living at home. For many, moving back home provides a much-needed opportunity to "buy time" to figure out questions of identity and vocation, as well as save up enough money to move out on their own. But some twentysomethings find it too easy to get lulled into inactivity. In other words, living with mom and dad becomes just a little too comfortable. That's why it's essential to challenge young adults to use their talents and gifts. Anything you can do to help establish a focus on serving and helping others is healthy.

At the same time, it's important to help remove the stigma attached to moving back in with mom and dad. For many twentysomethings, moving back in with mom and dad is a humbling experience. It can be embarrassing to tell a current employer or potential romantic interest that you live with your parents. Living with parents has become a new norm in our culture as young adults figure out the next step in life and climb out of debt.

Moving back home can have a healthy effect on everyone in a family. Parents can get to know their son or daughter as an adult just as twentysomethings can get to know their parents on a new level. Young adults can also learn many of the basics of life from their parents. Everyone can benefit from the growth and celebration that are a natural part of the family life.

Source: Margaret Feinberg (www.margaretfeinberg.com) is author of *Twentysomething: Surviving & Thriving in the Real World* (W Publishing) and *What the Heck Should I Do With My Life? Find Your Place in This World* (Tyndale House).

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