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The 5 Things You Should Never Do With Your Older Kids

Face it. They're not your babies anymore.

By [Melissa T. Shultz](#)



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It’s not easy stepping back and seeing our children as young adults, especially since in our hearts they’re forever our babies. As a mother of two, I’ve found that knowing when to talk, and when to keep our opinions to ourselves, is key. Here are some common mom slip-ups I hear frequently, and how you can avoid them.

1. Telling them what to do. You know the drill: They tell you a story and you can hear the train coming right at them, and you think, OK, I can fix this. Before you say it out loud, stop and ask yourself if the fix is something they’ll figure out eventually, on their own. What’s worked well for me is asking them if they want advice or if they just want me to listen. By doing this, you’re establishing boundaries together, and they feel respected. The caveat? Health and safety issues.

But even then, preface your thoughts with some version of “Because I love you, I’d be remiss if I didn’t say there are some red flags here for you to consider.” And remember, tone is everything. Remove the judgment.

2. Not talking about money for fear we’re stressing them out. Handling money is a life skill, just like any other. It has to be learned, and if they have no experience, chances are they won’t know what they don’t know. If you want your children to be financially independent as adults and understand the value of a dollar, it’s always best to be up front with them about what you can afford when it comes to college, weddings, cars and more. You don’t need to go into debt so they don’t have to. If you do, down the road, you’ll feel resentment and they’ll feel blindsided — especially if they make financial choices you don’t agree with — like buying a new car for cash while you’re still paying off their college.

3. Criticizing their significant others. As a daughter, sister, wife and mother, I know that words are hard to take back, and sharing negative comments about your child’s partner is a sure way to make them feel as if they need to choose between you and who they love. Your goal is a lifelong relationship with your child. So whatever negative feelings you’re harboring, keep them to yourself until you can let them rip with a trustworthy girlfriend, instead. Besides, we’ve all seen it — criticism could end up bringing them closer together for the wrong reasons.

4. Confusing being their social media friends with the freedom to post on their sites, at will. Go ahead, Facebook-stalk — they know you are — but don’t actually show you are by liking and commenting on everything. Give them space. Ask them what they are OK with, and honor it. And whatever you do (and I have this on high authority), don’t tag them with articles about safety, disasters and STDs. It’s super-embarrassing.

5. Saying they’ll get over a breakup when they really just need you to be their chicken soup. Yes, they likely will get over it, but they’re not thinking in those terms. They’re thinking about how much it hurts, so sympathize. Remind them of all their fabulousness. And remember No. 3 — don’t criticize their significant other, even now when you really want to go into full-out mom protective mode (my default). There’s a good chance their paths will cross again, and if they do, your child won’t reveal any more to you about what’s really going on for fear of your disapproval.

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Melissa T. Shultz is a writer, and the acquisitions editor for Jim Donovan Literary, an agency that represents book authors. She's written about health and parenting for The New York Times, The Washington Post, Newsweek, Readers' Digest, AARP’s The Girlfriend, AARP’s Disrupt Aging, Next Avenue, NBC’s Today.com and many other publications. Her memoir/self-help book From Mom to Me Again: How I Survived My First Empty-Nest Year and Reinvented the Rest of My Life was published by Sourcebooks in 2016 and named one of “3 Inspiring Reads” by Parade.com. Melissa recently co-founded Card Sisters, a new line of greeting cards for women. The tagline is: Women Friends Are Sisters At Heart.

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