

5 Godly Tips to Love and Support Your Adult Daughter

If you're a dad with a 20 to 30-something daughter, you know that she's learning the art of "adulthood" one step (or mistake!) at a time.

Today's guest blog is written by my beautiful friend, 26-year old Hannah Ellenwood, and I know you will love hearing how her dad has supported her through the ups and downs of her learning process in this season of her life.

I am excited at the opportunity to share about my experience of navigating adulthood with my dad. More specifically, I'll be opening up about how he's helped me so that any dads in that same season with your own daughters can hear it straight from me—a 26-year-old daughter who is still adjusting to this world of "adulthood."

The transition from "teen" to "adult" is a thrilling and scary time beyond what I had ever anticipated. And the reality is that we daughters *need* you—our dads—now more than ever.

I'll never forget the day I packed up and moved across the ocean for college. Because I grew up as a missionary kid in the Czech Republic, my parents had taken me to the airport to see me off, but they couldn't come with me. I was thrilled and absolutely terrified at the same time. My mom was in tears while my dad just laughed, smiled and said: "I honestly couldn't be more excited for you to go!"

I remember feeling a little offended at first—I wanted him to be sad I was leaving. But then he continued:

"I've spent the past 19 years investing in you and praying for the woman you would become and now I get to watch you live out who you are. I have full confidence in you and full confidence

in God, who is in you. And I am *so proud* to be your dad.”

He wasn’t celebrating the fact that he was getting rid of me. He was celebrating me and this new season that he was releasing me into—*independence* as an adult woman. And though he was sending me off, I always knew he would be available to me when I needed a place to land.

And this is why I want to give you some practical pointers today.

Let’s be real. As exciting as it is to release your daughter into becoming an independent woman, it’s also a bit awkward and can feel clunky to navigate. The reality is, though, that she still needs you and this may be the first time in her life that she realizes just how much. It’s key for you to partner with her as she navigates this new world of adulthood.

Here are some of the significant ways my dad has done that with me over the past seven years. I hope they spur you on to think of practical ideas for how you can partner with your daughter in this season of her life:

1. Pursue her.

I know it can be tricky to figure out the balance of being involved as a dad with not being too involved. I’ve talked to several friends whose dads have seemed to just go silent once they left the house. They all say they wish he would reach out more and pursue them with more intentionality. I love when my dad connects with me on FaceTime for no other reason than to catch up. It makes me feel so valued—and it tells me he enjoys our conversations and sharing life with me. He’ll ask me about my week and catch me up on his. It speaks volumes to me that on his drive to or from the office, or while he’s relaxing at home, he’ll pick up the phone and call. I love that he thinks of me!

2. Learn the stranger.

Just because she's out of your house doesn't mean you should stop learning your daughter and the person she's becoming. I can tell you one thing for sure: Nothing about our 20s is clear. We are more confused about who we are now than we've ever been. I've changed directions for what seems like a hundred times. I've come face-to-face with my ugly sin. I've found new things that make me come alive. I've discovered more of who I was created to be, but I've struggled with it just as much. So, dads, keep leaning in and learning the stranger—and by that, I mean ask good questions. Listen with compassion. Give her space to change and grow, but be a student of her as she does. I have really appreciated the questions my dad asks me as I figure life out. They are asked in the context of who I am and who I've been, and they help me thoughtfully consider who I am becoming. And I know that he's learning right along with me.

3. Know your daughter.

As you learn who she is, show her that you know her and relate to her from the things you've learned. It is so easy to continue relating to your daughter as the little girl you raised. And while she still is your little girl, she's also becoming a woman, influenced by her new community, her work and the city she lives in. She's her own woman. It goes a long way when you allow her to be the woman she is becoming; when you've taken the time to learn who she is today and choose to relate to her from that point. She may start caring about social issues she didn't used to care about or get involved in activities she's just now discovering she likes. She may approach relationships differently and need you to help her navigate all the change.

4. Celebrate who she is.

As she is changing and becoming the woman she was created to be, find ways to celebrate what you've learned about her. Send her a text telling her what you are proud of. Take her out to

dinner when she accomplishes a goal. I remember one day, my dad sent me a text out of the blue telling me something he had observed in me over the past couple of months and simply said he was so proud to be my dad. He doesn't do it all the time, but when he does, it has the power to transform my whole week. I see myself differently when I get to see myself through his eyes.

5. Be there to catch her and hold her when she fails.

She will make mistakes. I've made so many. In fact, just a few weeks ago I realized I owed thousands of dollars more than what I thought I would with taxes. It was my first time filing under self-employment—I didn't know what I was doing. The news shook me. I immediately texted my dad, because I needed him to save the day. He was boarding a five-hour flight. But he knew that I had the potential to worry myself into a pit that would be hard to get out of, so he bought wifi on the plane just so he could keep talking things through with me and speaking truth to me. That small act of love made me feel deeply loved and cared for because I know he never gets wifi on the plane. It truly meant the world to me. Your daughter will probably make mistakes like this too. And she will need you to be there to catch her, love her, encourage her while speaking truth to her when she feels lost, lonely and confused. You have incredible power to remind her what is true and who she is.

Dads, we—your adult daughters—still need you.

We make mistakes and have a lot we're trying to figure out, and it can be as overwhelming as it is exciting. We are going to trip and fall on our faces, and we need you to be there to love us when we do.

And it's OK if it feels clunky trying to figure this out. It feels clunky to us too. But the fact that you're pursuing us with intentionality says everything.

And the rhythms you set for engaging us now set the tone for

our relationship as adults—and now is the best time to start practicing. {eoa}

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