

Top 7 Things to Avoid When Trying to Reconnect with an Adult Child

By Tina Gilbertson, LPC

1. Being in a hurry.

It's natural to feel that you're in a race against time to salvage your relationship. But as much as Time is a thief, it's also a healer. The repairs you're making are too important to be rushed. Focus on understanding the situation first, then plan your course of action based on that.

2. Acting from emotion.

Emotional behavior is impulsive behavior. What feels good in the moment, we often regret later. The right actions toward your child are born out of intellectual understanding and thoughtful planning, not urgent feelings. Strategy, not spontaneous or random behavior, is required for successful reconnection.

3. Blaming someone else.

Yes, someone else may be a bad influence and that's very unfortunate. But you can't change that by pointing it out, and blaming others is often interpreted as defensive and/or aggressive. Focus on what you can control, and take as much ownership of the situation as you possibly can. The more you own, the more power you have to make positive changes.

4. Ignoring a no-contact request.

If you've received a clear request from your child to stop reaching out, briefly acknowledge the request and then take a step back. Continuing to contact your child in any way can prolong the estrangement. It's okay to write notes or cards to show them later, after your relationship is back on track.

5. Failing to recognize your power.

You are The Parent. You will always be The Parent. Your role imbues you with the power and authority to set the tone for the relationship you share with your child(ren). No one else in their life plays the special role that you do as their father or mother. Even if you feel powerless, your actions can and do have an effect on your child or children.

6. Using money or gifts to maintain ties.

Bonds based on material goods fall apart if those goods stop flowing. Make sure your support for your child is much more emotional than financial. Be a source of good feelings, not just money or things. Anyone can give your child things, but few will offer the truly valuable gifts only a loving parent can bestow.

7. Believing your child will forget you.

Your role as a parent makes you unforgettable to your child(ren). You will always be 100% their mother or father, even when you're not in contact. The parent-child relationship can never be erased or replaced. In that sense, parents are forever. Trust your own importance, and use it wisely.

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