

Close families raise more independent adults

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You're already 25 and you still live with your parents. You're 26 and you still bring your laundry take home food from your mother. Don't worry; new research at the University of Haifa found that, contrary to common belief, young adults who maintain a close or moderate relationship with their parents exhibit greater independence in their personal lives than those who have a distant relationship.

In her research, Dr. Irit Yanir evaluated how a parent-child relationship is connected to one's ability to fulfill society's expectations in terms of settling down and establishing an intimate relationship. Dr. Yanir conducted in-depth interviews with psychologists, parents and young adults between the ages of 23-27. An additional 100 families (father, mother and child) completed 300 surveys as part of the study.

According to the researcher, a close relationship with parents is one in which children talk with their parents often and regularly spend time together (eating meals together, for example), and one in which a child feels comfortable sharing his thoughts and experiences with his parents. The researcher differentiates between connectedness and relationship-orientation, which refers to the youth's need to satisfy his parents and fulfill their expectations. A connected offspring may share with his parents and solicit their advice, and still make independent choices and decisions.

"An independent young adult is one who exhibits independence not only in his day-to-day life but also in the emotional sphere, and who makes his way in life with emotional and intellectual autonomy," she explained.

While a close relationship is often viewed as a sign of dependence, the research results show that those with close relationships with their parents were more financially self-sufficient, more independent in their day-to-day lives, professionally stable, felt more mature and were more likely to be involved in a stable intimate relationship. Those who maintained distant relationship with their parents and tended to make choices out of a need to rebel against their parents' expectations were less independent into their late 20s. "The research found that following adolescence, the familial connection is an important factor in forming one's identity and living an independent life. It seems that not only can independence and closeness exist together, but they actually flourish together," summarized Dr. Yanir.

Source: University of Haifa

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