

Is Your Child Ready to Leave Home?

by Corinne Smith, Ph.D.

Willingness to take responsibility and social and emotional maturity have much to do with success in adult life as academic skills. Young adults whose self-management skills are good in most of the areas listed below are probably ready for independent living. (Note that even the best prepared youngsters will not start out functioning well in all areas.) Those who lack ability in many areas may need a sheltered environment after high school until their skills improve.

Mature young adults:

- can set reasonable short-term goals and make plans to achieve them. They can plan a social engagement or make a realistic list of chores for the day for example.
- can stick to their principles and stand up to peer pressure.
- have reasonable impulse control; can delay gratification when appropriate. They can balance “what I want to do” and “what I need to do” most of the time, for example.
- understand their own strengths and limitations; they can identify situation, setting, and modifications that make it possible for them to do their best.
- can manage day-to-day personal finances. They can make deposits, write checks, pay bills, keep simple accounts, and keep spending within budget guidelines for example.
- can stick to a schedule; get up and go bed at reasonable hours; get to work or class on time; and eat regular meals.
- have developed “memory methods” for keeping track of appointments, assignments, chores and other obligations.
- can shop for and prepare simple meals.
- have good health and grooming habits: dress appropriately for the weather; know how to keep themselves, their clothing, and living spaces clean; are reliable about following doctors’ orders (including taking medications on time); understand the consequences of drug and alcohol abuse and the importance of practicing safe sex.
- can drive or use public transportation safely.
- can monitor their own behavior. They are usually aware of the impact their behavior has on others and can identify when their behavior has been irresponsible, inappropriate or offensive).
- are accountable for their own actions; take pride in their successes and responsibility for their mistakes.
- can respond appropriately to emergencies and know what to do in case of injury, a medical emergency, fire, power failure, etc.
- can ask for help and locate appropriate sources of support when needed.
- can accept supervision and constructive criticism.
- can follow directions and work independently for reasonable periods of time. They do not have an excessive need for praise, monitoring or other forms of attention.
- usually interact courteously with supervisors, teachers, co-workers, and service providers.
- can initiate and maintain appropriate social relationships with peers.
- know and practice healthy methods of reducing stress such as exercise, talking problems over with others, meditation, hobbies, sports and other recreational activities.

Permission to reprint was granted in November 2002, to the Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, by Corinne Smith, Ph.D., Syracuse, NY. This article was excerpted from, *Learning Disabilities A to Z: A Parent's Complete Guide from Preschool Through Adulthood*, by Corinne Smith and Lisa Strick. New York: Free Press, c1997.