

Parents to the End: How Baby Boomers Can Parent for Peace of Mind, Foster Responsibility in Their Adult Children, and Keep Their Hard-Earned Money

Linda M. Herman

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Linda M. Herman wrote *Parents to the End* to fill a need. Although many books offer advice for parents of young children and teens, few focus on the relationship between adult children and their parents.

Herman is a psychotherapist in private practice who has led parenting workshops. She is also the mother of two adult children and her book is tempered by her personal and professional experience.

Parents to the End challenges parents to examine their role in enabling the financial and emotional dependency of their adult children. The line between “nurturing caregiver” and “debilitating enabler” may have more to do with the signals parents send than any lack of character in their adult child, according to Herman. To move parents to this realization, the author chiefly uses case studies and self-awareness exercises. The third part of the book contains stories of people dealing with some of the most common sources of conflict between parents and adult children: i.e., substance abuse, alienation, and gender orientation. Each chapter ends with a “Lessons Learned” section where a “check list” reminds parents of the areas in any given situation where they have control. The Appendices also contain worksheets, including ones for parents to discover their parenting style and to help them determine the seriousness of their child’s behaviors. These and other productive aspects of the book make it more instructive than prescriptive.

In the second part of the book, Herman discusses the natural process of separation children and parents experience, which ideally results in the child becoming independent and self-sufficient. She uses language easily understood by non-professionals and suggests further reading. Later in the book Herman explores the positive and negative aspects of empathy. When she moves into a commentary on motivation, however, the author strays from her area of expertise. She connects the social programs of the Johnson administration (Medicare, Food Stamps, etc.) with the sense of entitlement some young adults may voice. A similar problem occurs when she implies that what is true economically and socially in certain countries of the European Union is also true in the US. A careful reader will note that she is repeating, not examining, these conclusions.

Herman aims her book at all parents, but her real audience is mothers. All specific examples are mothers, often single mothers. Will fathers be able to connect with the stories and advice offered in *Parents to the End*? It’s worth finding out.

GERALDINE RICHARDS (January 7, 2013)

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