

Helping adults navigate the decision to move back in with parents

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A recent study offers insight into how adults can navigate the often awkward experience of moving back in with their parents.

"People move back in with their parents for a lot of reasons, and the trend is increasing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic woes," says Lynsey Romo, co-author of the study and an associate

professor of communication at North Carolina State University.

"We launched this study before the pandemic happened because we wanted to learn more about how adults who move back in with their parents manage that process," Romo says. "How do they think about it? How do they talk about it?"

"We think the findings are valuable because they provide some guidelines people can use to help ensure that 'moving back [home](#)' is a step forward instead of a step backward," Romo says.

For this study, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 31 adults between the ages of 22 and 31. And the findings were straightforward.

"On one hand, study participants were certainly aware of the stigma associated with moving back in with one's parents as an adult," Romo says. "However, it was equally clear that framing the decision to move back in with one's parents as an investment in the future helped people think about the decision in a positive way and communicate about it in a positive way."

Specifically, the researchers found there were four things people did to make the move back home a positive experience for themselves and their parents.

1. Communicate clear expectations: It was important to have clearly defined expectations for both parents and [adult children](#). For example, do the children pay rent? Are they expected to be home by a certain time each evening?
2. Contribute to the household: Things worked more smoothly when grown children made clear what they would do to benefit the larger household, such as attending to domestic chores.
3. Lay out intended timelines: It was good for all parties when the

people moving back home had thought out how long they would be living with their parents, what their career and financial goals were, and how living with their parents would help them achieve those goals.

4. Embody adult behavior: Adults returning home should avoid slipping into habits formed when they were children, if they want to be treated as adults. In short, both [parents](#) and their grown [children](#) should give and expect respect in their relationships.

"Moving back home is a reality for a lot of people right now," Romo says. "Hopefully, this work will help them make the most of that circumstance and avoid any stigma associated with it."

More information: Jenna S. Abetz et al, A Normative Approach to Understanding How "Boomerang Kids" Communicatively Negotiate Moving Back Home, *Emerging Adulthood* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/21676968211012584](#)

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