



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: How Parents Can Resolve Conflict and Find Peace with Their Adult Children – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Kathy Koch

Air Date: June 3, 2026

Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Family Talk is the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and today part two of our conversation with Dr. Kathy Koch discussing her outstanding new book called *Resolve Conflict and Find Peace and Hope with Your Adult Children*. We've got a link for that book up at jdfi.net. Dr. Kathy, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Kathy Koch: I'm glad to be here. Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: The parenting landscape between adult children and their parents seems really different now than it did before. And in our last program, you mentioned the fact that a lot of parents are dealing with the fact that thinking they were going to be investing in their kids' lives and doing all these things for them, they wound up idolizing them instead. Talk about why that is so important for us to understand as a, how did we get here moment? Because I think once you put it that perspective, I went, well, of course, that makes perfect sense. But the kid would say, "I'm not here to heal your wounds or to fulfill your needs. I'm here to be the person God created me to be."

Dr. Kathy Koch: Exactly. Right. So the main reason that we would want to change our idol worship of our kids is that it dishonors God. God created us to worship Him. He is worthy of all praise and honor. He is completely everything we need. In what He does and in who He is, He meets all of our needs and He's the one worthy of the adoration and the honor. And if we do it with our kids, we're putting them in a place of God. It's not right for God. It's not right for us. And I think it's terrifying for a lot of our adult kids. They're feeling the pressure when they realize that if they're happy, we're happy. If they're sad, we're sad. If they have a good day, we have a good day. If they have a bad day, we have a bad day. And that's pressure that isn't theirs to feel.

I think it weakens so much. It's just mostly the pressure that they feel and that we need them to fulfill us. That's not appropriate. I get it. The first time your kid walked, you celebrate, you took pictures of all the efforts, you bragged on all social media platforms and you were so excited, rightly so. And when your kid

graduated from high school, I mean, there's moments where you celebrate. My ministry's called Celebrate Kids. Celebrate their accomplishments, celebrate their emotional growth, celebrate opportunities that they have, but don't idolize them because of the opportunities they have. It's not appropriate.

Roger Marsh:

Yeah. And this rite of passage, moving on, graduating from school, finding a spouse, getting married, starting a family, those things happen all the time. And to be fair, when we talk about no contact, it's been historically proven that a lot of times an adult child would say to his or her parents, "I'm moving in a different direction based on the person they married and where they moved to." I mean, it was not uncommon to say, "We're going to not have as much involvement." And I think most parents understood that. They could either say, "Well, you got this great job opportunity and we grew up in California and you're moving to Texas or whatever." But at the same time, there was a hint, the underpinnings of that was, "Yeah, we're moving there because we're trying to establish ourselves." I mean, that happens and parents just have to learn how to roll with that.

But when we say no contact, we're talking about kids who are literally making either some kind of declaration or they're just in the vernacular of the day, they're just ghosting their parents all together and saying, "It's too much. I need some space." Help us understand what goes into no contact and maybe even give us a little taste of why it might be necessary for some children to do that.

Dr. Kathy Koch:

Interesting perspective. So first I'll say, to anyone's listening who's had this happen, I'm so sorry. My heart breaks for you because it's not what you intended. You thought by now you would be friends with your adult children and you'd be having coffee every Tuesday morning. So I'm sad with you and for you. I think there's two major reasons that no contact is occurring in our culture. One is the influence of social media. Our adult children are following people that you don't know they're following. They're listening to certain shows, binge watching, binge listening. There's certain music and there are certain personalities that they're following and they have been told and manipulated by these personalities that they've been abused or that their life couldn't have been that good. And they're beginning to believe that, which is just so sad. Rather than standing up for their parents and their family background, they're agreeing with people they don't even know to say, "Oh yeah, you must be right." Now, it could be people at work. It could be people on a team that they play on. It could be any number of people, but there are people in the culture who can't imagine that life could be good. I've even had people ask me, "Kathy, are you sure your family is as good as you say? Were you really celebrated?" I've had people question, did your grandparents really live kitty corner? Did dad really cut a hole in the fence? Was your grandma always make ... We had pancakes every Saturday morning. My brother and my four cousins on my mom's side and me, we had homemade pancakes every Saturday morning in our childhood. And there are people who look at me like, "You must be making that up. Nobody's that good." But that's not true.

My family was really good. I come from strength and I'm so beyond grateful. So there are people who are being lied to and children who are not standing up. I think they want an excuse for their bad behavior. They want an excuse for their negativity. They want an excuse for their sin. They want an excuse to say, "Oh, that's why my life has been hard. I wasn't parented well." So they're believing the lie so that they can kind of defend their choices if that makes sense. Now the second main reason that I believe adult children are separating from their parents, and I don't say this lightly, Roger, but it would be the helicopter mom that if you've overparented, now and I say this lightly because you can't go back and re-parent, but please listen because you can make a change here. I never would've written the book if I didn't think we could make changes.

But if you smothered your children, if you over parented, if you were a helicopter mom and you said, "Move the juice." And if you say, "Hey, grab the lunch, you don't want to be hungry, aren't soccer tryouts on Thursday, do you want to go to the backyard and dribble the ball to get ready?" That was good parenting. You were loving, you were helping, you thought it was the right thing to do, but a consequence of that was that your children never had to think on their own. And they have perhaps discovered that they're weak and fragile. This is why I wrote a whole book on *Resilient Kids* because if we overcorrect and we prevent the valley experience, do a U-turn, don't go there. Then there's weakness. Now they're adults and now they want to grow up. Now they want to be independent and they need to be independent.

This is God's design of the family that we do separate in some way, shape or form. So again, if they don't think their mom can be a different kind of mom, they feel like they need to separate because they can't afford to be smothered. So again, if you're the mom who texts every day, who calls every Saturday, who rings the doorbell without being asked to come over, now you're not invited. You walk in the house and you start to clean before you're invited to do so, you act as if it's your house. If you are still overparenting, it won't go well for you. They need to know that you respect them and you ask permission to engage with them. You say, "Hey, I'd love to come over. I bought so many strawberries. Could I drop some off? Today, tomorrow, what time would be good? I know that you love strawberries. And hey, I'll stay 15 minutes."

Every chapter ends with five practical ideas and one of them would be the 15 minute rule where you actually set a timer on your phone and you say, "I promise 15 minutes. I won't interrupt your entire night." And you come in and they hear the alarm at 15 and you say, "Okay, that's 15. I'm going to go." And if they invite you to stay, praise the Lord, but show them that you are a woman of your word and that you don't need to be in their business. You can hear it in my voice. Adult children want you to know about their business but not be in their business and that's hard. So pray for yourself, invite accountability, and tell your children your goal. Apologize if you feel you should apologize. Ask you be forgiven if you feel like you sinned against them, but you might not have sinned.

It might have just been that that's the parenting style you had and now you need to change and invite your children and say, "Man, I want to change. If I'm smothering, just tell me to back off. I need to know when you're feeling smothered." I'm not sure that I would recognize it because it's coming from the motivation of love and help.

Roger Marsh:

And it doesn't feel like that helicopter, snowplow, black hawk, whatever term applies in a situation like that. It's interesting, talking about Dr. Kathy Koch today. Here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Dr. Kathy is the author of a brand new book called *Resolve Conflict and Find Peace and Hope with Adult Children, Strategies and Conversations That Work*. And you'll find a link for it of a [jdfi.net](#) along with a link for Celebrate Kids. I was thinking as you were describing that, Dr. Kathy, about a scenario with my son, he's the youngest of his three siblings and he had gotten a job, was working full-time and he reached out to me. We live in a different state now and he reached out to me with a question about a job situation. And the more we started talking about it, we realized that he had already committed to taking a new job but didn't want to disappoint his employer. He works in education.

And so I gave him, I thought some very sound advice. I was answering his questions, trying to follow everything that you would recommend. And this was in the middle of October and I didn't hear from him again until Thanksgiving. And I thought, well, now isn't this ... So Thanksgiving rolled around and I kind of sent him a text like, "Happy Thanksgiving. How are you guys doing?" And we had a nice little conversation and went on stretching on for about an hour. But I realized now isn't that a scenario where he reached out to me looking for advice. I gave him advice and I think it kind of reminded him that maybe he hadn't handled the situation as well as he thought he did. And so therefore that came in my way and I had to take a step back and say, "Okay, what did I do? What did I not do? How did I handle this?"

And we worked through it. But I mean, it was very telling that it was a very sensitive issue for him. I thought, wow, I really need to rethink the way I present what I would call advice even when it's asked for because of the way it's going to be received. It's a very different time that we're living it, it seems like.

Dr. Kathy Koch:

Oh, it is. I love that you're going to be analytic and you're going to think about it and you're going to wonder absolutely. Again, nothing done intentionally wrong. Maybe we have a tendency to give so much input that it's overwhelming. Or again, do they feel badly and that the thing that they don't want to feel weak, they don't want to need it. They don't want to need it. And I've said to adult children as recently as a few days ago at an event, you should always need your parents. The family dynamic is ordained by God before the church. This is His design and we should never go out of it. So if you're feeling weak, ask yourself why. Do you have a false expectation for yourself? To invite a parent to have input into your life is the right thing to do. Now, do we have the freedom?

Do we have the confidence, Roger, to let them disagree with us? That's the thing. Did you present information to your son in a demanding, controlling, "I've figured it all out. Here's what you need to do, way." Or did you say "it might be worthwhile for you to think through these scenarios" and did you give him the freedom to think through them and arrive at his own conclusion? And then did you affirm that? This is what becomes awkward, but we can learn these skills. We can learn how to be different. And eventually, of course, my hope would be that if we learn to be different, they'll receive the difference, trust us and we'll go skip down the road together, but it might take some work to get there.

Roger Marsh: Now, one of the issues that we are dealing with in the culture is, well, at the same time we have adult children who are saying, "Helicopter mom, back up. You smothered me and I really want to have my own feelings and my own life and make my own decisions." At the same time though, I've read a very interesting statistic. I don't know where it was from. It was on the internet, so it has to be true, but about the number of young people who are delaying marriage. And the statistics said in the mid 1970, like 1975, something like 91% of all young women aged 30 and under were married, 85% of young men. But now you fast forward to 2025 and those numbers had dropped to 25% of young women and 16% of young men.

They're just not moving into that what used to be a kind of a rite of passage for people who are called to marry. I'm not saying everyone's called to marry. My sister's been happily single for a number of years and she's Aunt Linda to everybody and they just love her. But you've got a situation now where sometimes there are adult children who might move out and they try to move back for whatever reason and that kind of creates a different dynamic now because you've got this adult-child relationship but you're under the same home and in some cases under the same roof you grew up under.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes.

Roger Marsh: What recommendations, Dr. Kathy, do you have for those parents who are saying, "I want to help my kids, but it's got to be different if they're living here at age 32 instead of age 17."

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes, it should be. And again, I would say what an honor that they would feel safe with you, that they would be willing to call you and say, "Life has changed. I need some help. Could I come home?" So first of all, you should feel very honored that they would trust you. It is hard to ... The economy's hard. I know of so many families where they've had adult children graduate from good universities, they've gotten good jobs and they can't afford to live in the community where they got the job, unless you want them living in a really horrendously difficult situation, which nobody would want, especially their daughters to live there. So it's difficult. Some of them have had bad relationships and they finally have figured out that that relationship was not good and they want to come home. Now you don't say, "Oh, I'm glad you finally gave up on that guy."

Roger Marsh: Yeah. Think that all you want. Just don't say that out loud. Yeah.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yeah. So this is where we pray for self-control. We pray that we would be respectful and that we would have other people we can vent to, but we don't have to vent to our own kid. And I do recommend, there's a whole chapter on if they move home and other issues that in most cases, we would want to discuss a contract. We would want to discuss how long do you think it might take for you to get out of debt? I need you to share your bank account with me in order for this to work. And if they resent that, then you're going to have to make a hard decision. But I think that becomes important. You have a contract perhaps and you have to talk about things like chores. What is your 32-year-old son or daughter responsible for? And do you expect them to come to dinner every night?

If not, are they supposed to call you or is it just Sunday, what kind of freedom do they have? What kind of obligation do you expect them to have? Can they help you walk the dog every other night? These are the kinds of things you talk about. And if they're not willing to understand that you're not an Airbnb, that it is a home and there needs to be order, that's especially true if they're younger siblings. So if you have a 25-year-old move home and there's an 18-year-old and a 14-year-old still living at home, it is very important that you understand borders, boundaries, dynamics because of the younger children being influenced by the lifestyle of the older sibling. Are they allowed to bring a girlfriend or boyfriend home? Are they allowed to stay in a bedroom with a closed door? You wouldn't have allowed that at 18. Will you allow it at 32? And I don't tell you in the book what is right or wrong. I simply, I think, provide opportunities for you to think through what would be best and to have the conversations that need to happen.

Roger Marsh: Yeah. I love the subtitle of Dr. Kathy Koch's new book because it says the focus here is on strategies and conversations that work. I mean, this is a fluid scenario. It's not like you can go on Amazon and buy something to download and the next thing you know it's going to rectify the situation. Well, you can get the book from Amazon. That'll certainly help, but you wouldn't or get it from Celebrate Kids. But the idea that we as parents and there's the grandparent component too and sometimes this is where the separation pops up. Kathy, you alluded to the wonderful family dynamic that you had in your neighborhood, which is just so wonderful. And I too grew up in a home where Saturday morning was pancakes and I did that for my kids too. And I put on way too much weight, didn't matter because there was something ... I'm a lousy cook.

I mean, the only thing I know how to make for dinner is reservations, okay. But when it came to getting a box of Bisque and a couple of eggs and get the milk and whatever you're going to do in there. And it's amazing. My kids to this day still, they're all in their mid to late 30s and they still talk about how good dad's pancakes were.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Oh, beautiful.

Roger Marsh:

Those moments are, they're priceless. And even when you do have the chasms, you can hear those moments and say, wait, okay, I understand. I get it and this is important. So if you're the grandparent now in a situation and you've got grandkids that you feel like I'm not being allowed to see them because of this awkward situation with my adult children, what are some tips that we as grandparents who might feel like we're kind of getting stiff armed that we can do to kind of not only bridge the gap, but not to use the grandkids as collateral or whatever, but rather to say, "No, we want this multi-generational family dynamic to work."

Dr. Kathy Koch:

Yeah, totally. And I love that you and I have the pancakes in common. Let me say something first to the grandparents who have good relationships with your grandchildren. Create memories like what Roger and I are talking about and memories that go back years and years. Create memories, talk about them. If you're in conflict with children and grandchildren, remember to talk about the things that you have in common, talk about the good memories and they'll remember and they'll smile even if they don't want to admit that there were good times, you're going to kind of force them to remember that there were. But when there is a chasm and when we don't have the opportunity to have much contact or any contact with our grandkids, first of all, grieve. There's a whole chapter on grief. You have to grieve the loss of relationships. You have to grieve the loss of dreams.

You grieve the loss of hope and expectation and you live rightly going forward. I think we pray. I taught... every chapter ends in a prayer and I teach in several chapters about the art of prayer, how to pray specifically, how to pray by name, how to pray the Scripture by name for your grandchildren. Pray that others who know the Lord will enter into your family's life. Pray for your children and your grandchildren that they will meet other believers. You may not be the one that wins them to the Lord. You might not be the one that brings them back to church. It's okay. It's not about you. Pray that there will be somebody on a soccer team that talks about Sunday school and Jesus. Pray that there'll be a coworker that talks about the joy that he has every Monday morning. He's just different on a Monday morning.

Why? Because he's just spent so much time with the Lord the day before. I think those things become really important. Remember with grandchildren too, that different isn't different. Different is just different. It's okay for your children to raise their children differently from how you raised yours. Now, obviously there's certain things that I would draw the line at, but different is different. Different isn't always wrong. But if your children feel you're always judging, why do you let them eat that? Are they still up? It's nine o'clock at night. That's not appropriate. They're their children, not yours and they have a right to that relationship and we need to keep our mouth shut oftentimes and be careful how we say what it is that we believe to be true. So again, if you don't have relationships, grieve and pray and have your hope in God, not hope in your children and look for opportunities.

Look for a little bit of growth. Celebrate what you have and don't make it sound like now the floodgate is open and now everything is going to be perfectly cool in the future, not necessarily, but be grateful for small growth, look for it, or you'll never have big growth.

Roger Marsh: Boy, and the temptation in that moment when you've been praying for this and wanting it and maybe there's a little hurt on your part is to say, "Oh, well, look who finally came to church." No, no, no, no. Exactly. Don't do that. And I had to take that thought captive as you were sharing it. I thought that's something I would do and that would completely mess things up. Dr. Kathy Koch, the book is called *Resolve Conflict and Find Peace and Hope with Adult Children*. And you mentioned hope. You have a quote in the book where you describe it this way. "Hope is not a passive attitude. It's a dynamic. It's something that is very, very active and it's a dynamic responsiveness to who you know God to be and who He has been for you." Talk about why the parents who might feel like their adult children are kind of lost to them right now can't lose hope because God is a God of restoration and redemption.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Yes. Yes. If you know God and if you don't, oh, please let us know so we can help you.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Dr. Kathy Koch: It'll change everything. It'll change everything. God is worthy of hope. Look back and recognize how faithful He's been to you, how His wisdom, love, compassion, passion, direction, all the things have blessed you and helped you and allows you to have the kind of life that you have. So we hope in God because He's worthy of our hope and it is a positive expectation. I love the way that my pastor defines it in the chapter. It is an act of looking forward. It is an act. It is a choice. It's a verb. It's an active activity and it's looking forward. We don't look back with regret all the time. We look forward with hope because God is there. God was there, He is here and He will be there, but it's essential that we not give up.

Roger Marsh: There is a parent listening to our conversation right now who says, "Okay, Dr. Kathy, I get what you're saying. I hear you. And I realize, wow, I didn't think the contribution to the separation here was mine. I thought it was my kid's going through something or whatever. And now I realize, boy, I really mess some things up here." Can you leave us with a word of encouragement for that to that parent in particular who says, "All right, I've got to start over again and man, do I have a lot of digging out to do? " What's a good place to start?

Dr. Kathy Koch: First, God bless you for your humility. That's the first step. The first step is to realize that I am imperfect. I've done the best that I've known how to do my entire life. I hope that's a true statement and I didn't realize how complex the adult parenting phase would be. I didn't realize that although we'll have always have this relationship that I had to look to change from being a parent to being a coach, from being a controlling parent to being a mentor. And now that I get

it, I'm willing to work on that. And so first of all, thank you for your humility and God is pleased and I think that's first. I think second would be to perhaps read the book and looking for specific possibilities that are relevant to your situation and that you would hold onto those and take those captive. And then I think you reach out to your kids if you can and you say, "Man, I've been frustrated. You know I've been frustrated. I haven't handled everything well. I've been judgmental. I have put you on the spot more often than I care to realize and I've read a book and I heard a podcast and it's changing me. Would you be open to me showing you that I want to grow in our relationship because I really do want to. You matter to me and I'm sad and I don't want to continue that." And then you wait expectantly hoping in God that you're going to get the answer you want and you don't give up.

Roger Marsh: I remember Kathy, this is a tender point for me. My dad passed away a couple months ago. He was 92 and when I was newly married, there's that new tension, baby shows up and how do you deal with in-laws and that type of thing. And we had always been close, but not super close. And we got into a ministry venture together and it just wasn't working for me to have my parents as involved in what we were doing with my new wife. And so I remember I wrote him a letter and I just said, "Dad, I can't do this anymore." And so he called me and he goes, "Hey, I got your letter and do you want to get lunch?" And I said, "Sure." And so we went to a restaurant and we started talking and I started sharing how I felt and everything like that. And I said, "So that's why I wrote this and I'm glad we're having this conversation. I hope you understand." And he looked at me and he has tears in his eyes. He said, "No, I don't." And it opened up just all sorts of dialogue with us for him just saying that. And I've never forgotten that. So with my kids and I think of other parents who are going through this, how difficult it is to be able to say, "Okay, I'm here. I want to understand but I don't. Let me listen to your heart." Your book really touched me in that way and I'm grateful that you wrote it and then we got a chance to talk about it here today on the program. Thank you for that.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Well, Roger, I'm blessed by your authenticity and your humility. Yeah, what a moment. Whoa, thanks for sharing that.

Roger Marsh: Well, this has been a wonderful conversation, Dr. Kathy Koch. Again, I mentioned before we leave the air for today, again, the book is called *Resolve Conflict and Find Peace and Hope with Adult Children: Strategies and Conversations That Work*. It doesn't make any sense in the publishing world, but it makes perfect sense in where you are right now. I mean, this is a great title because it tells you exactly the kind of information you're going to get and I love it. Dr. Kathy Koch, thanks for being with us today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Kathy Koch: Well, God bless you. I've loved being with you. Thanks for the opportunity.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring part two of my conversation with Dr. Kathy Koch about her outstanding new book called

Resolve Conflict and Find Peace and Hope with Your Adult Children. If you'd like to hear today's program again or to share it with a parent who needs this encouragement, visit jdfi.net and when you click onto our link, you'll also find information about how you can get a copy of Dr. Kathy's book, *Resolve Conflict and Find Peace and Hope with your Adult Children* as well.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening today. From all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we appreciate your prayers and ongoing support. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.