

WHY MAKING YOUR CHILD WORRY DOESN'T WORK

A recent study found that non-estranged children of parents with illness or disability had more conflict and negative feelings than those who didn't. While this may seem obvious, it highlights the role of an adult child's worry in causing conflict and distance. One of the reasons that I talk a lot about not using guilt with your adult children is that guilt, at least in contemporary society, creates distance. So does worry. Many parents believe that if they only make their children worried enough, they'll come to their senses, reach out, and express the love and connection that was once so clearly there.

While that is, in fact, true for some children, for others, worry is experienced as such a burdensome emotion, that the adult child doesn't know any other way to find relief from it other than to distance himself or herself.

Some children become abusive or disrespectful to the parent because they know that their gripe is so mild that it could be ignored or repudiated. In this case, an adult child may treat the parent in a disrespectful or rejecting manner because they're trying to make the parent out to be more of an ogre than they really believe them to be as a way to not feel guilty.