

I'M CONSTANTLY STRIVING FOR MY PARENT'S APPROVAL. HOW CAN I STOP?

A **Anna Percy-Davis, executive coach (annapercydavis.com), says:** Striving for and wanting one's parents' approval is a very normal and natural process that develops when we are toddlers. Whilst we tend to outgrow this desire when we are young adults, most of us never quite move past the desire to please our parents or to make them proud. A lot of teenage rebellion can be traced back to individuals breaking away from their parents, establishing their own independent identity and fighting against the desire to get our parents' approval. However, once the teenage years are over we usually reconnect with our parents and get satisfaction from their pride, approval and respect. If this process doesn't go quite so smoothly, we end up believing that our parents don't approve or aren't as proud of us as we would like. In situations like this, the sense of not being quite good enough dominates the relationship and we can get stuck in negative behaviour patterns. So how do we stop this?

Here are five tips to help you manage your desire for parental approval, so it no longer feels toxic or draining.

HAVE A REALITY CHECK

It is worth trying to understand why you are seeking parental approval – is it because your parents never quite give it to you or is it because you don't believe in yourself? If you find that you feel you can't get anyone's approval it might be you being too hard on yourself.

UNDERSTAND WHERE IT'S COMING FROM

If you feel it really is your parents' lack of approval it's worth trying to understand this too. Are your parents particularly negative people? Perhaps your parents never got approval themselves from their parents, they don't want to spoil you or they are just anxious for you and this anxiety comes across as a lack of approval.

LET GO OF THE VICTIM ROLE

Be careful of being a victim here – if you allow yourself to believe you aren't good enough, you can easily fall into the victim role of believing you will never be good enough which is a helpless, hopeless place to



be. This place doesn't give you any options to escape this pattern of behaviour as you believe you are just the victim and therefore cannot push back or escape from any negative behaviours.

FIND THE BALCONY PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

Individuals who take you up and show you the view – who are affirming, positive and upbeat individuals who remind you of your strengths, not your weaknesses – are known as balcony people. If you feel your parents tend to be basement people (those who take you down to the basement and make you feel less good about yourself) make sure you counteract their influence with spending time with the balcony people in your life.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Often we are our own harshest critics and this can be fuelled by the sense our parents don't approve of us. So if you find you are constantly filling your mind with negative self talk and examples of why you aren't good enough, stop, and start being kind to yourself. This could be anything from going to a yoga class, seeking out balcony people or going on a spa day.