Hi Alice,

I've recently moved back home with my parents and I'm struggling! While I know this is the best option for me financially, I can't help wishing I could just leave.

My Mum doesn't work right now, so she's constantly at home. I'm studying part time from home, and working 20 to 24 hours per week. I feel like I never have time to myself! It has come to the extent that I now feel paralyzed in my bedroom, unable to even get up because I don't want to see her. I don't think this is helped by the fact she has always been very pushy, and had ambitions for me that I could never fulfill. She constantly acts as though I am a disappointment and I feel helpless and totally unmotivated to work, and now even get out of bed, in this environment.

On top of this, during an argument a few weeks ago, I said something along the lines of, 'you don't own me, you don't have the right to run my life' and my Mum said, that she does in fact, own me, I am her daughter and I belong to her, and she will always be in control of my life. She treats me like a child. I can't go anywhere without demanding questions: where are you going, who with, what time will you be back, why, how, what, etc. She comes into my room without knocking, no matter what I'm doing, or what state of dress I am in. I am 23, and completely stuck. I see no other option for my mental health than to move out again and seriously reduce the amount of contact I have with her. But I can't afford to.

Can you please give some suggestions as to how I can make this more bearable? Thank you.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Moving back home can be both a blessing and a curse. Particularly during hard financial times, living at home is a great way to save money and get back on your feet. However, living at home may lead to rising tension between you and your family members ? especially if you are used to having all the freedom in the world. Fortunately, there are ways to improve communication between you and your parent(s), as well as ways to make living at home more bearable.

First and foremost, learning how to talk to a parent in a constructive way can help cool down the situation. Though it may seem like your parent will never come around and see things from your point of view, a little patience and persistence in communicating with them can go a
long way. Here are a few handy tips:

- **Ask for your parent to set aside time to talk**, ideally not after a specific event that really irked you. If s/he seems reluctant, emphasize how important it is to you to have a frank and respectful discussion.
- **Explain how you are impacted by your parent?s scrutiny.** It is important that your parent knows how their hawkish behavior makes you feel. Explaining why it has stresses you out, in addition to proposing a potential solution, could be one way to open up the issue for discussion.
- **Work on establishing boundaries.** As an adult, you have the right to decide which aspects of your life you would like to remain private. Perhaps you can communicate to your parent why this is important to you.
- **Approach the conversation calmly and maturely.** How you handle your parent?s restrictions and reactions may be interpreted as a sign of your maturity.
- **Pick your battles.** Focus on trying to change the things that matter to you most. Find ways to let your parent know that you can live with certain rules, but that others feel restrictive or unfair.
- **Don?t forget to communicate that you are thankful for all your parent does for you.** Though this may be difficult, your parent will certainly appreciate that you recognize that their actions are out of love and concern.

Secondly, it is important that you have a positive outlet to help you cope. Fortunately, there are a myriad of ways to make living at home more bearable. Perhaps you can join a book club, recreational sports team, religious group, or volunteer organization. Going to places where there are regular meetings may make it even easier to make friends who you can talk to, because you see the same people who hold the same interest as you on a continual basis. Lastly, you may want to speak with a trusted family member, mentor, or counselor.

If you feel that a conversation is too difficult, perhaps you can organize your thoughts in a letter or e-mail. Remember that parents often have ideas on how to best support you and may need a little help as you transition in her/his eyes from child to adult. Hopefully, as you continue to build your communication, your parent will ease up. In the meantime, try to focus on the positive aspects rather than the negative. Living at home can be a great time to save up, refocus your goals, and recharge. Best of luck!

Alice!
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Talking With Parents

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Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) 
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