

immediately), long term relationships with both parents and children are the best tools for effective influence. If this isn't an option, consider new methods to reconnect in the future.

As children grow older, opportunities arise to challenge black and white thinking. Use questions such as, "Have you heard of this other view [or example]?" "Have you thought about what that would mean for [a group of people, another situation]?" "I wonder why [a credible source] would say [the opposite]?" We can allow them to lead if they want to hear more. Usually, one or two children in a family will have what psychologist Daniel Goleman refers to as emotional intelligence, already assessing and experiencing doubts, enough to form questions.

If they're experiencing significant emotional pain, more direct statements are in order. Pain is often a turning point. If we've had a similar background, this is a good time to let them know. We can avoid attacking their parents, while not making excuses for the parents. My mother used to say about my father, "At least he's not an alcoholic." I was glad about that, but it too easily dismissed what we experienced.

Encourage Autonomy; Value Emotions

Someone else has been making their decisions, stripping them of opportunities to grow, to wrestle with difficult choices and to make mistakes. Many

religious systems reach far beyond childhood when it comes to restricting autonomy, even choosing spouses for adult children. Autonomy means they make their own decisions about beliefs, even if they return to the toxicity. We can provide a safe place for choice.

Because they've experienced the minimization of their emotions, children may find expressing themselves difficult. Emotional upheaval might emerge in the presence of a safe person. Guilt, shame, indecision, depression and fear are part of the mix. These may turn to anger as they become aware of the toxicity.

A word of caution: Their situation may trigger *transference* when they begin to trust us. According to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, transference is "a patient's displacement or projection...of those unconscious feelings and wishes originally directed toward important individuals, such as parents."

This means we might become the unintended target of strong attachment followed by heated rejection. Therapists know how to address transference; most lay people do not and take unnecessary offense to this common dynamic. Clear boundaries minimize misunderstandings. Children from ultra-religious homes have a greater chance of a well-adjusted adulthood if we demonstrate this through relationships. □

Rachel Ramer is the host of "Lost the Legalism, Kept the Love" on Facebook.



In Memory of Larry Omasta

We here at Plain Truth Ministries lost a dear friend, co-worker and partner-in-Christ on March 30th, 2023. Lawrence "Larry" Omasta served as a part-time employee in our ministry for many years, helping each week with the incoming mail, processing of donations, praying over prayer requests, answering phones, as well as assisting with various research and special projects.

Larry was a loving and dedicated husband, father, grandfather, leader and Christ-follower. Prior to joining Plain Truth Ministries, Larry enjoyed a long career in the world of media that spanned over forty years. Having hailed from Western Pennsylvania, Larry was a life-long Pittsburgh Steeler fan, and we joked that he loved Jesus, his family, cups of coffee and his beloved Steelers—in that order!

With an easy laugh, Christ-centered faith and a great perspective on life, Larry, as PTM's resident octogenarian, will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers remain with his family and life-long friends. □