

"HOW TO RESPOND TO MY TROUBLED CHILD'S DEMANDS AND MISTREATMENT?"

Estrangement is hard enough with a reasonably healthy adult child. With a child who has mental illness, it's even more challenging. Typically it's a matter of love and limits. Love because they need it and limits because they can communicate in ways that are so abusive and disorienting.

In general, you're better off empathizing with your child's complaints or perspective for a significant period of time (months if not a few years) before you begin to set limits.

This way you have it in the bank that you're not trying to avoid responsibility and your child knows that you're capable of it.

However, if you have been empathizing and taking responsibility, and it's either not getting better or getting worse, then you may need to switch to setting limits which means:

- * Calmly stating what you're willing to do or not willing to do without blame, criticism, or guilt trips**
- * Calmly letting your child know that when they talk to you in a highly provocative or disrespectful way, they make it hard for you to listen or pay attention. That you know they have something important to say and you want to hear it but that you're unable to when they use that tone of voice.**
- * Don't let yourself be blackmailed but don't criticize the child for trying. Simply say, "No, that won't work for me." Or "No, I'm not willing to do that. But I am willing to_____."**
- * Empathize with what they're feeling or saying. Remember empathizing doesn't mean that you're endorsing what they're saying, only that you care about their feelings and perspective.**
- * Ask what they'd like from you specifically**

*** Model being in control of your own emotions without acting like you're trying to control their emotions**