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## Life with 'boomerang' kids can bring some conflicts

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By Mackenzie Carpenter, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

It was a call many parents have dreamed of making, although few have actually dared to:

Hello, officer? My kid won't clean his room. Can you come make him?

The 911 call to a suburban Cleveland police department Thursday evening didn't exactly go that way -- the father, Andrew Mizsak, actually hung up before providing details -- but a follow-up visit to the home by police in Bedford, Ohio, revealed that, indeed, there had been a family altercation over a messy room.

Oh, and one other small point: The "kid" in question, also named Andrew Mizsak, was 28 years old, living at home, and a member of the Bedford school board.

"The guy definitely took his medicine when I called him. He was really, really sorry it happened," said Michael McIntyre, a columnist for the Plain Dealer in Cleveland, who says a weekend post about the incident received 116 comments, many of which could not bear reprinting in a family newspaper.

"Boomerang" children are nothing new in American family life. In tough economic times, adult children, usually recent college graduates or divorced parents with toddlers, often will move back in with mom and dad to save money.

A 2007 survey by MonsterTRAK, a division of the Monster.com job search Web site, showed that 22 percent of new graduates said they planned to move home for more than six months, although U.S. Census data show a much higher figure -- 65 percent.

For older adult children, recent U.S. Census numbers, in fact, show a slight trend upwards in the numbers of adults 25 to 34 who are living in their parents' homes -- up from 12.9 percent of young men in 2000 to 15.1 percent in 2008. For women, the numbers increased from 8.3 percent to 10.3 percent.

It's not clear whether this particular Ohio parent's 911 call -- ultimately resolved when he declined to press charges -- is a sign of a boomerang boomlet. If it is, how should parents handle the coming deluge of economically strapped children who might have very different ideas about staying out late, doing laundry, cooking, contributing to a family budget -- or messy rooms?

"The communication part is so important," says Christina Newberry, 31, of Vancouver, British Columbia, whose Web site, [www.adultchildrenlivingathome.com](http://www.adultchildrenlivingathome.com), markets a \$27.97 contract for parents and children that lists the ground rules in advance.

"Conversations are helpful, but it can be really difficult when you're having a fight to remember exactly what you agreed to do or not do," said Ms. Newberry. "Agreeing on the rules ahead of time is a really helpful way to make sure everyone is on the same page."

Dr. Anandhi Narasimhan, a psychiatrist in Los Angeles who grew up in Shaler, says she's definitely seeing more young adults in her practice who have moved in with their parents

"People can't find jobs," she said, "and the fact is for many, living at home with your parents can save a lot of money. It's not necessarily that they're lazy -- sometimes they really need that support."

Dr. Narasimhan, 32, would know. She lived at home for a year after graduating from college. "It helped me become more independent later. It's tough out there, young people have these enormous loans and lack the financial stability to be totally on their own, so it helps."

Michael Cruny, 25, graduated Friday from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and is now back home in Washington, Pa., with his mother. A struggling economy has prompted most of the law firms he has interviewed with to push back their hiring dates for new associates. Mr. Cruny plans to spend the summer studying for the state bar exam and hopes to have a

job by fall.

And during that time, he will engage in plenty of conversations with his mother about messy rooms.

"My mom is a self-professed neat freak," he says, noting that he's not "super picky" about the condition of his room. "She'll make a little comment about an empty can of pop that I've left lying around, and I'm pretty witty, so I come back with a comment of my own."

Still, Cruny mother and son get along -- during a phone interview, he was in the grocery store shopping for tuna steaks that he would grill for her that evening -- which isn't the case in many of these living arrangements.

Ms. Newberry actually moved back home twice, once after college, and once after the end of a relationship -- both the most common reasons for the boomerang effect. One reason her experience was a good one, she says, was because she knew how long she was going to stay. It wasn't open-ended.

Other questions worth resolving in advance, she added, include whether children should be allowed to have overnight guests in their rooms. What about paying rent? And what about those messy bedrooms? "Some people view the adult child's bedroom as 'their' space that they can do whatever they want with, others don't see it that way. There are so many pieces to the puzzle."

One conflict was over Ms. Newberry's late hours.

"My parents are worriers," she said. "They didn't necessarily need me to tell them where I was going, but if they woke up the next morning and I wasn't there, they didn't want to start thinking I was lying in a ditch somewhere. And I didn't want to call and wake them at 4 a.m. to tell them I wasn't going to be home."

The solution: A text message to her parents' e-mail address, which let them know where she was without impacting her lifestyle.

Unfortunately, Noreen Hossein has "technologically challenged" parents, so that won't work, she laughed. The 23-year-old University of Pittsburgh graduate, now a hospital researcher, is back home with her parents in Herndon, Va. While she is saving a boatload of money -- rents for studio apartments begin at \$1,500 a month -- she admits to having a few "boundary issues" with her family.

"They like having me home at a certain time," she says, so to keep the peace, she's home most nights by 10 p.m.

"It does put a crimp in my social life," she says. "I just come home when they want me to." She suspects, though, that she won't move out until she weds.

"My parents would love it if I came back and move in with them," said Dr. Narasimhan. "They want me to get married, too, but I don't think living at home is necessarily going to help me there."

"It's not exactly a good pickup line at the bars," added Mr. Cruny. "Hey, why don't you come on out to the suburbs, to my mom's house?"

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