

When a prodigal child exists in the family, either with or without addiction, controlling behaviors by parents are likely to occur. Some control is appropriate, especially with minors, but over controlling can contribute to deterioration of both the prodigal and the parent, with negative ramifications spilling out to the entire family. While this is more dramatic in the prodigal situation, it can occur frequently in families without prodigals.

Understanding this, every parent would benefit from being familiar with the proper paradigm for their own responsibility in regard to their children. We all need to understand our own boundaries as healthy individuals, especially as we parent. If we have healthy boundaries ourselves, we can better set the proper boundaries and enforce consequences for our children. If we can't say "no", how can we expect our children to say "no"? We must have faith that God is actually the only one in control and that as humans we really cannot control anything. (Proverbs 21:31)

Our responsibility TO our children includes leading ourselves well first and foremost. Modeling Christ out of a grateful heart and bringing glory to God is the ultimate priority in our life. (Col 1:17) We need to be responsible TO our children by teaching them Biblical principles of right and wrong. (Proverbs 22:6) We also need to warn them if we see aberrant harmful behavior as we live in Biblical community with them. (Ezekiel 33:1-10). Ultimately, if our children rebel against our Biblical authority, then they may need to suffer the consequences of their action for their own well being. (Prov 29:19) We need to place our children in God's hand. His love for our children is perfect and beyond our comprehension. When we let go of responsibility FOR our children and give that onus to God, we begin to get our own personal relationship back with God and start to experience the fullness of life God always has wanted for us. (John 10:10) The added benefit of this approach is that this approach to parenting gives our child the greatest chance of growth and recovery and relationship with God.

Our responsibility remains TO our children instead of FOR our children. The table below compares and contrasts the differences clearly.

If I Am:	Responsible FOR Others CONTROL	Responsible TO Others CARE
I Do:	Fix Protect Rescue Control Carry Their Feelings Don't Listen Join In	Show Empathy Encourage Share Confront - lots of curious questions Level – listening to what is not being said Listen
I Feel:	Tired Anxious Fearful Responsible Angry Guilty Embarrassed Lonely Rageful	Congruent Relaxed Free Aware (of reality)
I Am Concerned With:	The Solution Answers Circumstances Being Right Details Performance	Relating to the person- not the solution I believe if I just share myself The other person has enough to make it
I Am:	A Manipulator A Controller A Disabler	A Helper A Guide A Friend A Parent A Spouse
My Self Worth:	Goes Down	Goes up

“I expect the person to use the best that is in him; to make decisions and accept responsibility for their own actions. I believe that each of us has enough to make it on his own.”