Estrangement.

The man had been in a terrible funk, a depression, since his son's violent meltdown and exit from his life. Researching his son's behavior, and his daughter's behavior before him, when they each accused him of having abused them, he learned he was not the only parent being accused of parental abuse. Yelling was now considered a form of abuse and a national epidemic. When his daughter first mentioned that he had abused her emotionally, he defended himself. He tried to explain to her that he hadn't yelled the first time he asked them to do something, or even the second, third, or fourth time. However, somewhere along the line, when they still didn't listen, he did yell, and then they did, in fact, behave. She responded, "Oh yeah, blame the victim!" He was stunned. Where had she learned such a retort? When his son echoed her, he defended himself even more vigorously. The man, finally, asked them for proof of their allegations, which they ignored, and in desperation and seeking an unbiased, third-party intervention, since no therapist had invited him to attend any sessions, he took a polygraph test. The test was thorough, expensive, state-of-the-art, and he answered all the questions truthfully, including the final question, which was: "Did you ever abuse your children?", to which he answered "No."

The man sent the test results to his children, but they never responded, and afterwards they blocked him from contacting them.

Four years went by; his now married daughter contacted him and, after being very nice, asked if she could borrow money. When he replied no, she hung up. A year later, his son phoned and told his father he had been evicted and was broke, and asked if he could come and stay. Without thinking, the man said yes.

The man loved his children, and he had built a guest unit in case they ever visited. It was detached from the main house and was a modern, comfortable one-bedroom place. His son

moved in and stayed for nineteen months. The man took his son on a day trip to Burney Falls, a place they hadn't been since his son was a young boy. Other times, the two went bank fishing and caught trout. They went out for lunches and dinners. His son drove him to cataract surgery and eye injections to try to stop AMD. On several occasions, his son wouldn't speak during the two-plus-hour drive to his appointment or back home.

The man got his son jobs with local builders as he came to know many people where he lived. But his son would find a reason to quit every job. His son stopped working, stopped looking for work, and relied on his father to survive for the last six months. The man baked bread, smoked meats, cooked twice a week, and made sure his son had food and spending money for groceries and other necessities. Although they argued a few times, the man tried his best not to say anything that would set his son off. And while the man knew he was enabling his son, he hoped that his son would come to terms with whatever was bothering him.

One summer evening, his son was watching an MMA fight in the guest unit and yelling and swearing so loudly that it upset the man. He walked over and asked his son, "Can you keep it down, please?" His son followed his father home, screaming at him about how he had been waking his son up every morning while getting feed for the deer. His son's anger grew until he punched the front door window with his fist, breaking it. He then bent the screen door while trying to pull it off its hinges. The man believed his son was going to punch him next, and thankfully he did not. He then went home, broke the front door by slamming it repeatedly, and then threw a glass, breaking not the glass but also the expensive wooden blinds. As his son packed the pickup truck his father had recently purchased for him, he kept yelling at his father, "You're an old man!" Finally, his son's tantrum ended, and, honking several times, he drove away; it was ten-thirty at night. The man surveyed his surroundings; debris, discarded tools,

trash, cat litter, and household items littered the property. Garbage in large black bags was thrown onto the driveway, and the beautiful guest unit was trashed and smelled putrid because it had not been cleaned in months. Dirty clothes, every dish, pot and pan were unwashed, and the toilet all reeked, forcing the man to open the windows lest he vomit.

The next day, still in shock, the man tried to contact his son, but his son had blocked him.

The man descended further into depression, which had now lasted for more than two months.

The cost of repairing the damage his son had caused was in excess of fourteen hundred dollars, and didn't include cleaning the guest unit.

He remembered that while he and his children were estranged, he had been happier. The lack of negativity and responsibility had become comfortable. After his dog died, he was sad, but he didn't want to be responsible for another dog. Somewhere, deep inside, he'd had enough of being responsible for others, but when his son phoned and asked if he could come and stay, the man's parental instincts had kicked in, and he immediately said yes. Now that he knew how his children truly felt about him, he could accept it, and he would remember this experience.

His depression morphed into acceptance, and he understood that his children, now grown, independent adults, whom he always loved and trusted, had stopped caring about him. It had taken a long time, but finally accepting that fact set him free. He realized he now had no family and that he was on his own. His acceptance, the final stage of grief, allowed him to live as such.

Written by Peter Skeels © 11-10-2026