

The background of the entire image is a collage of various shades of orange, red, and brown. In the center, there is a photograph of several books and papers. One book is open, showing its pages. Another book is closed, showing its spine and cover. The text "a new chapter" is written in a dark purple, cursive font across the middle of the image, overlaid on the books and papers.

a new chapter

**Fitting in to Your
Student's Life at College**

Turning the Page

You've been through quite a few life chapters with your student so far. From first steps to the college application process, no one knows the story quite like you.

And now it's time to turn the page and embark upon yet another chapter: "the college years."

A Time for Trust

Transitions can be tough. Whether your student is leaving for school or living at home while attending classes, it's an adjustment for everyone involved.

One thing that will change is the frequency and nature of your communication. You won't be able to see every part of your student's life. You'll need to trust her instincts and the positive values you instilled in her. This trust is KEY to making the college transition work for both of you.

A student who feels trusted by his parents:

- Has more self-confidence
- Can stand up for what he believes
- Knows he has support back home
- Is better able to say "no" when necessary

A student who feels mistrusted by her parents:

- May defy authority because it's expected
- Won't communicate about what's happening at college
- Will look to others for support, some who may be bad influences
- Will keep secrets that could be harmful

The Benefits of Change

While change may seem overwhelming at times, it can also be beneficial as...

- A chance to know your student on a deeper level
- A catalyst for good, sometimes necessary conversations
- A reason for you both to try new things & stretch beyond your comfort zones
- A way to utilize other means of communication
- A chance to learn things about one another
- An opportunity to miss — and gain a renewed sense of appreciation for — one another
- The start or continuation of your adult relationship

An Evolving Relationship

Just because students head to college, it doesn't mean that they are leaving you behind. They still need you, your wisdom, your support and your love.

They also need you in different ways now...

Students Need a Little Space

It's difficult for a student to start making his own life at college if his home life keeps pulling him back. Let your conversations contain a balanced mixture of what's happening on campus and at home. And try not to do everything for your student — figuring some things out on his own is a key step that will serve him well throughout his life.



Students Need to be Able to Make Mistakes

Part of exploring this newfound sense of independence involves making mistakes. A student who is terrified of “screwing up” may not take positive risks such as tackling a new class or trying out for the swim team. Students need support as they take risks, which most often lead to growth.

Students Need to Know That You Believe in Them

As your student tries new things and expands her worldview, her perspective may change. Successful students are able to experiment like this because they know that someone at home believes in them — in their intelligence, their initiative and their ability to make good decisions.

Interested, Not Intrusive

Just because your student is in college, it doesn't mean that he no longer needs you. Your interest is quite essential to his success!

The key is being interested in what's happening in his life without being too intrusive. Some ways to do that effectively include...

- Don't make conversations feel like “quizzes”
- Ask what he is *learning* in class instead of always focusing on grades
- Balance communication by sharing what's happening in your life, too
- Casually ask about new people he mentions rather than drilling for details
- Don't call, text or email constantly — there needs to be a healthy distance
- Ask what she's getting involved in and what interests her so far — it always feels good to share these types of things

The Road to Adulthood

One of the best ways to support your student is by understanding the college's role in her life. Faculty and staff are not here to take over the parenting role. We *are* here, however, to help your student develop into a responsible, healthy adult.

Student Development

In a nutshell, we...

- Provide opportunities for students to achieve competence in academic and non-academic arenas
- Challenge them while also providing support
- Teach them how to manage emotions
- Support the development of positive relationships

- Help them become autonomous
- Encourage them to determine who they really are, on many levels
- Help students identify and pursue their purpose
- Offer assistance as they develop their values and determine what they stand for

Many members of the campus community are involved in the student development process. They include:

Residence Life Staff • Orientation Guides
Student Leaders • Health Services Staff
Career Services Professionals • Coaches
Faculty Members • Campus Counselors
Peer Educators • Academic Support Services
Support Staff • Campus Ministry Personnel
Student Activities Staff • and many others!

As Student Advocates...

- We make ourselves available, during “office hours” and beyond
- We welcome students coming to us with a problem
- We don't *ever* want to see a student get hurt
- We don't serve as students' “baby-sitters”
- We are concerned with students' safety and teach them how to keep themselves and others safe
- We respect students' privacy yet can't always promise confidentiality because we may need to get others involved
- We treat students as adults, involving them in problem-solving
- We intervene if we notice behavior of concern
- We expect students to take responsibility for their actions
- We are here to support students every step of the way

Promoting Self-Responsibility

Self-responsibility is one of the most important things your student can learn at college. We expect students to take responsibility for...

- Their behavioral choices
- Respecting rules and policies
- Academic honesty and persistence
- Personal integrity and care
- Developing healthy study, eating and sleep habits
- Treating others well
- Seeking assistance when needed
- Being a positive member of the campus community

That's why it's not up to you to "fix" things when something happens. Many people are available to your student to help her right a wrong. As long as she takes responsibility for her choices and actions, she'll find support every step of the way.

FERPA Facts

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of students' education records.

Once a student enters college or turns 18 years old, parental rights under FERPA transfer to the student. Information from his student record is typically not shared unless he's a dependent, gives written permission or there's a health or safety emergency.

Institutions are required to post an annual FERPA notification, so check out the school website — or just ask.

Source: Family Policy Compliance Office of the U.S. Department of Education

“Students who are involved in campus life are more likely to stay in school and do well academically.”

Involvement = Success

Students who are involved in campus life — through clubs, hall government, athletics and beyond — are more likely to stay in school and do well academically.

When a student gets to campus, she is searching for a sense of *belonging* and engagement. Getting involved in a campus organization is a positive way for her to belong.

If your student wants to join the campus programming board, try not to squelch her enthusiasm. She *can* focus on academics while also participating in out-of-class activities. Matter of fact, involved students tend to do better in school! So, encourage her to get involved. You'll be guiding her on the path to both curricular and co-curricular success.

Campus Support

Your student's well-being is of utmost concern! We want him to flourish, to learn from mistakes, to experience triumphs and to stay healthy. And there are ways you can help in this pursuit.

Wellness

Staying well is vital to students' overall success. So...

- Take emotional issues seriously by encouraging your student to talk with a campus staffer
- Tout the benefits of good sleep
- Send healthy snacks instead of junk food
- Encourage community service and engagement
- Suggest simple ways to incorporate physical activity into their busy schedules

Academics

You can be an academic supporter by...

- Regularly asking your student what she is learning
- Not always focusing on grades — talk about class content instead
- Encouraging her to seek assistance from a tutor, advisor, faculty member or academic support services if she's having trouble
- Asking her to discuss class projects with you
- Encouraging her to get involved in academic life through extra credit, participating in class and asking questions
- Helping her figure out creative ways to balance work, social life, family, activities and classes

A Web of Support

Students who are struggling with various concerns can turn to:

- The counseling center
- Residence life staff
- Advisors
- The learning center
- Health services
- Peer educators
- Career services
- The office of disabilities
- Faculty and staff members

- Campus ministry
- Student affairs staff

Campus professionals are here because they truly *want* to work with college students and many have specific training to help them connect with this population. Encourage your student to seek help rather than “toughing it out” alone. *Asking for help is a sign of great strength* — make sure your student knows that.

Smart Choices

Major decisions will continuously face your student. You can help by providing decision-making food for thought.

Money Matters

Encourage smart financial practices by...

- Working together to set up a budget plan for the year
- Warning your student not to apply for every credit card offered
- Paying expenses together
- Setting spending limits if your student is using funds you provide
- Warning him about frequent visits to the ATM or debit card overuse
- Encouraging him to seek scholarships and other financial aid opportunities

Alcohol & Other Drugs

It's possible that your student will be tempted to experiment with alcohol and other drugs during her college years. You can help her make smart choices by...

- Talking openly about alcohol and other drugs
- Empowering her to say “no” when something doesn't feel right
- Learning all you can about alcohol, prescription meds and other substances
- Not glorifying your own “youthful drinking days,” if you had them
- Helping her learn from mistakes
- Leaving the lines of communication open

Playing It Smart

Remind your student that safety experts advocate...

- Keeping living spaces locked
- Not walking alone in isolated areas
- Never getting in a car with someone under the influence
- Refusing to accept drinks from strangers
- Not storing valuables in his room
- Reporting any threatening messages right away
- Avoiding being alone in isolated places
- Never becoming so intoxicated that she loses consciousness or the ability to keep herself safe
- Not being alone with unknown people

Campuses can be very safe places, as long as students play it smart.

A Bigger World

Your student's world is going to become bigger as a result of her college experiences. The things she learns in class, the people she encounters, the experiences she has, the discussions she engages in... all can lead to greater understanding, acceptance and appreciation.

We all want your student to become the best person she can be. A solid citizen. A compassionate friend. A critical thinker. An accepting individual. All of this — and more — is possible, with your assistance.

Role Modeling

Your student looks to you for an example. He will treat people a certain way and believe things about certain groups, quite possibly as a result of your example. So, consider your role in shaping his beliefs.



Openness to Diversity

Chances are that your student is going to be positively challenged by the new people she encounters on campus, from the roommate with different political views to friends of varied ethnic backgrounds. Encourage this type of growth because a student who is open to diversity will excel in today's fast-paced, global environment.

Community Contributions

It may start with hall government. Then, your student may try community service, leading an organization or doing an internship with a group he believes in. Community involvement means different things for different people. What's most important is that they do *something*.

What Makes the World Bigger?

- Experiencing different kinds of people
- Trying new things
- Learning about other cultures, religions, etc.
- Pitching in to help
- Having thought-provoking conversations
- Being open to possibilities

They'll Always Need You

As your student prepares for a bigger world, it doesn't mean that you will be left behind. Yes, students need to experience freedom, independence and self-sufficiency. Yet, they'll *always* need you. Allowing your relationship to evolve as your student experiences the college world requires an open mind, compromise, flexibility and trust. With these tools at your side, the college transition can be a wonderful, eye-opening experience for all.