

Transitioning to and Coping With College Life

Confidentiality

We are always able to listen to your concerns about your student.

While many university students are just beginning to establish independence, we cannot, for ethical and legal reasons, discuss a student's client status with families unless the student has given us written permission to do so. This includes information about whether a student has sought services and kept appointments as well as the information and issues shared and discussed in therapy sessions.

Information we can provide family members:

- General information about psychological concerns
- Information regarding helping students obtain services

Information we cannot provide without written authorization:

- Whether a student is being seen here or has kept an appointment
- Discuss the content of sessions
- Discuss treatment plans or progress

Transitions to College

Important Things to Remember as Your Student Transitions to College

Remember that your student's transition to college is a transition for you as well

The transition to college can be a stressful experience for families, especially if your student hasn't lived away from home before. During this important time of transition for the family, many family members put their own feelings and reactions "on hold" while helping their student prepare for university life. However, attending to your own emotional needs will go a long way toward helping everyone feel comfortable with the challenges that college presents.

Recognize that feelings of ambivalence, anxiety, and excitement about your student leaving home are normal

You may feel a variety of emotions as your student prepares to leave home for the first time, including ambivalence and anxiety. While these are common during this period of transition, it is also normal to look forward to the relative peace and quiet of having your active older adolescent out of the house. You may be excited to have the place to yourself, or to have more time to spend with other family members or friends.

Remember that coming to the University is a tremendously important developmental step toward full adulthood

It represents the culmination of 18 years or so of learning, much of which has been geared toward assuming a productive place in the world. This is the time when your hard work as a family member will show itself as your student begins to make independent choices. Many families find that it helps to focus on the fact that providing their student with this opportunity is a priceless gift. Be proud!

Helpful Coping Strategies for Family Members

Allow yourself to have emotions

There is little benefit in pretending that you don't feel sad, guilty, relieved, apprehensive, worried, etc. about the transition to college. A healthier approach is to discuss your feelings with your family, friends, clergy, or whoever is a source of support for you. Talking with other family members of college-bound students can be particularly helpful.

Make "overall wellness" a goal for yourself

During stressful times, it helps to get enough sleep, eat healthy meals regularly, and get adequate exercise. Spending time doing the things you like is another step toward wellness. If you are feeling good, you are more likely to have the energy to help your student.

Find a new creative outlet for yourself

Many family members find that taking on a new challenge is an excellent way to manage and channel their energy and feelings. Have you ever wanted to travel? Volunteer in your community? Assume a new project or responsibility at work? Write a book? Learn to fly-fish? Make a quilt? Get your own bicycle and ride all over town? Make a list of all the things you intended to do while your student was growing up, but never had the time to do. Now is your chance!

Be patient with the transition

It is important to recognize that it will take some time to develop the right balance between your student's developing need for independence and their simultaneous need for support and guidance. Every student is different in this regard and has different needs, and these needs will almost certainly change over time. In addition, students don't always know how much independence they can handle or how much support they will actually need. So, be patient, and understand that it will likely take some time for everyone to figure this out.