

When Your Son/Daughter Leaves for College

Going to College

This is an exciting day. It's one your student has been planning for and anticipating for a long time. Show your confidence in them by resisting giving them too much advice and too many reminders. They can and they will find their way around the residence hall and campus. In advance of this day, talk about how often they want to be called and when they'll come home next. Encourage them to participate in orientations and other start of school programs.

Don't Decorate Their Room

This is a great opportunity for your student to start to negotiate and work things out with their new roommate. You can assist, but let them decide if they want to loft their beds or not.

Stay in Touch

Schedule phone calls. Many students have cell phones and if you schedule calls you won't interrupt class, library time or the middle of a soccer game. Use e-mail to communicate. College students are busy and are accustomed to Internet communication. Your Saint can answer you any time, day or night at the convenience of their schedule. Remember they like snail mail letters too. It's comforting to receive letters and care packages from home.

No Surprise Visits

Students have lots of activities, even if it's the afternoon nap they have been planning on, so it can be stressful if you make surprise visits. They are adults now. Call before you come to see them.

Homesickness

Your student will likely be homesick at first. Everything is new and different. They've said goodbye to familiar friends and surroundings. Nothing is the same. Listen to them, if they feel sad, grumpy and lonely, but remember that these feelings are a normal part of adjustment to college. Suggest they don't come home every weekend so they can start to form new friendships. Even if it's hard, encourage them to finish out the semester. A sense of belongingness should occur when they return in January.

Don't Worry Too Much About "Crisis" or "Disaster" Calls

Often times students call home when they are feeling overwhelmed by tests, papers, or relationship problems. It can seem like everything is falling apart. They don't necessarily tell you when something good is happening. Listen, be supportive, and ask them what they're going to do. Usually they feel a great sense of relief after unloading their troubles and go right back to

handling school and friends. If they have roommate problems, ask them if they have talked to their roommate. This is a great chance to learn to communicate assertively with others. You can suggest they drop in at the Career and Counseling Center to talk about their concerns.

Be Interested in Course Selection

To keep communication open, ask about the courses your Saint has registered for. Don't give advice unless your student asks for it. College is a time for discovery and they need your guidance within limits. Even though you are older and wiser, they need to follow their own dreams.

Adventures and Risks

Discuss dating. Talk to your Saint about Facebook, MySpace and how postings on social networking sites and the Internet can follow them for years to come. Have another conversation about drugs and alcohol. Try not to moralize, but discuss your views with them again about these issues.

Coming Home

Your son or daughter will be visiting on weekends and vacations but they have changed and you will need to renegotiate expectations. When they are at school they don't tell you all their plans. What will you expect when they are at home? Think in terms of common courtesy and what you would want any adult who lives in your home to let you know.

When to Contact Counseling Services

- If your son or daughter is not going to classes.
- If they are isolating themselves from peers.
- If they are constantly telling you how overwhelmed they are.
- If there are significant behavior changes, they are secretive, angry, more irritable than usual
- If they continue to complain that they have no friends.

Encourage them to contact Career and Counseling Services. If you are worried, feel free to contact Career and Counseling at (616) 632-2905 and ask to speak to the Director of Counseling.