

Letting Go: Suggestions for Parents of New (and Returning) College Students

Whether your first child is going to college or you're a seasoned veteran at the transition to college, the first few weeks and months are an emotional roller coaster for you and your son or daughter. It's only natural that you and they will experience ambivalence in this transition; excitement and fears, great expectations and disappointments, conflicting needs for independence and dependence. First and foremost, we would suggest you hold on... and maintain open communication

Some concrete suggestions:

- Recognize and respect they will have a considerable amount of autonomy on campus and while this may be what they've dreamed of it will probably provoke some anxiety and confusion.
- Your role is shifting to more of a coach or advisor; you have every right and responsibility to share your opinion and advice. Any attempts to "make them" adhere to your rules will probably fail. Stay connected and negotiate.
- Shift responsibility in their direction where possible, encourage them to solve their own problems and reach out to resources on campus for help (RA, academic advisor, faculty, health services, counselors)
- Have a discussion about your and their concerns or expectations about alcohol use, time management, budgeting, and academic outcomes.
- Place more focus on discussion about the content of their courses and not so much on their grades. The first few terms can be a major adjustment and they may not be able to get the grades they were accustomed to in high school.

Letting go successfully typically involves staying connected in a different way. Your son or daughter will want to look like they're holding it all together, but they may need you more than ever over the next few months.

- Let them know you're still there for them; talk about how often you wish to talk by phone when they're gone (let them take the lead on this).
- Send "care packages," notes of encouragement, convey important family news to help them stay connected to the home front.
- Acquaint yourself with text messaging if you haven't already, but reach out carefully; they can and will ignore you.
- Plan a visit to campus (just dropping in is probably not advisable) and even if they say they "don't care" if you come to family weekend, plan to come. It's a great opportunity for them to show off their new community.

While your son or daughter is moving into Coe; we welcome the entire family as a part of the Coe community. We have many excellent programs and resources to help in their transition here and fully expect it will be a successful one. As part of the Coe family we welcome and encourage you to reach out with any concerns you might have about your son or daughter and their success as a Coe student.

Recommended readings:

Parenting a College Student:

- **133 Ways to Avoid Going Cuckoo When the Kids Fly the Nest: A Parent's Guide for Surviving the Empty Nest Syndrome**
by Lauren Schaffer and Sandy Fleischl Wasserman
- **Almost Grown: Launching Your Child from High School to College**
by Patricia Pasick
- **The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness: Five Steps to Help Kids Create and Sustain Lifelong Joy**
by Edward M. Hallowell, MD
- **Don't Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money: The Essential Parenting Guide to the College Years**
by Helen E. Johnson and Christine Schelhas-Miller
- **Empty Nest, Full Heart: The Journey from Home to College**
by Andrea Van Steenhouse
- **The Empty Nest: When Children Leave Home**
by Shelley Bovey
- **Helping Your First-Year College Student Succeed: A Guide for Parents**
by Richard H. Mullendore and Cathie Hatch
- **The Launching Years: Strategies for Parenting from Senior to College Life**
by Laura Kastner and Jennifer Fugett Wyatt
- **Let the Journey Begin: A Parent's Monthly Guide to the College Experience**
by Jacqueline MacKay and Wanda Ingram
- **Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years**
by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treger
- **Parenting: Adjusting Your Stewardship as Your Children Leave Home**
by Richard M. Eyre
- **She's Leaving Home: Letting Go As Daughter Goes to College**
by Connie Jones
- **When Kids Go Home: A Parent's Guide to Changing Relationships**
by Barbara M. Newman and Philip R. Newman
- **When Your Kid Goes to College; A Parents Survival Guide**
by Carol Barkin

Thriving at College:

- **Caring for the Mind: The Comprehensive Guide to Mental Health**
by Dianne Hales and Robert E. Hales
- **How to Get the Most Out of College**
by Nancy Schlossberg and Arthur Chickering
- **The Naked Roommate**
by Harlan Cohen
- **The Ultimate College Survival Guide**
by Janet Farrar Worthington and Ronald T. Farrar
- **You're on Your Own, But I'm Here if You Need Me**
by Marjorie Savage
- **College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What To Do About It**
by Richard Kadison and Theresa Foy Digeronimo

- **College Rules!: How to Study, Survive and Succeed in College**
by Nist, Sherrie & Holschuh

Millennials at College:

- **Getting Ready for College**
by Polly Berent
- **A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League**
by Ron Suskind
- **Millennials Rising**
by Neil Howe
- **Millennials Go to College: Strategies for a New Generation on Campus**
by William Strauss
- **Rising Millennials Face Worldview Conflict**
by Shirley A. Carson