

Preparing for the Transition Between High School & College

As a high school student's junior or senior year approaches, a parent is confronted with a multitude of emotions regarding the future for their child. Parents may be anxious over tuition costs, worry about their child's reaction to a new environment, and be nervous about letting go. The transition for parent and child can be bittersweet. Adolescents work overtime to assert independence and detach. A parent feels a mixture of anticipation and anxiety. It is important to realize that your child is often feeling the same emotions and fears as you are, although they may remain distant and not express their feelings.

Following are some suggestions to smooth the transition from high school to college and help parents enjoy the remaining time with their child before college:

- Remain interested in your child's life but try not to be overly involved. College will be a big change at first, and your child may start trying to assert their independence or distance themselves from the family so they can prepare for this transition.
- Assist your child with financial aid preparation. It may be difficult for parent as well as child to discuss finances and college costs. Offer to fill out any financial aid forms or supply them with the necessary information on income, assets, taxes, etc. Work to help locate financial aid options, including scholarships, loans and grants well in advance.
- Let your child know that although they may be at a distance, the family will make frequent phone calls, write or e-mail often, and send care packages. Contacts by phone and mail are occasions for the student to look forward to and keeps them connected with family and their community.
- Create a photo album of family pictures and special memories to give to your child before they leave for school. This is something they can look at during the lonely times, and they can also share their family with new friends and roommates.
- Help your child in planning for life away from home and let him/her know that you are interested in their thoughts, feelings and concerns about school. When shopping for school and dorm supplies, use this time to initiate discussion. If your child is hesitant to discuss their feelings, an informal, relaxed talk between the two of you may come easier while you are doing a project together. Discussion may flow easier and more freely when it is not structured or planned.