



**talk**  
about it



## Supporting Your College Student

Your role as a parent has changed now that your student has entered a new life stage with different responsibilities. Their realities are changing more rapidly than ever. This is a challenging, worthwhile, and sometimes comical time for you (and for them).

### What They Need

- Independence in navigating and making choices
- Space to develop as the person they are
- Grace in their growth – they're human too
- Information, support, and reassurance
- At times, your advice (they may not ask for it)

### Ways to Support Them

- Stay connected via phone, text, email (even snail mail) – even if they don't answer, they value hearing from you.
- Ask honest questions – they appreciate that you care.
- Be open – they'll trust coming to you for guidance and it lets them know you respect them as an adult.
- Know campus resources – websites, parent calendars, handbooks, etc.
- Educate yourself on common issues – alcohol and other drugs, sexual health, dating and relationships, time management, jobs and debt, partying and social groups, mental health, and homesickness.
- Offer information from valid resources, and maybe even share your personal experiences to help them distinguish between healthy and risky decisions.

## The Difficult Conversations

### Do's

- Listen
- Take time to collect your thoughts and respond
- Decide an outcome together and how to reach it
- Stick to the facts
- Use "I" statements
- Be persistent and patient
- Know each other's limits

### Dont's

- Have a conversation while either person is under the influence or in crisis
- Argue, preach, or debate
- Give advice based on what worked for you
- Be personally offended
- Feel guilty
- Label them

Decide with your student when and how often you will communicate. Whatever your communication plan is, make sure that it works for you both.




## Resources Helpful to Caregivers and Parents

- Books and articles – websites and bookstores have lists of books for parents & their college students
- Blogs and podcasts about parenting students through the college years
- Parent groups – start one or join one
- Professional Guidance – counselors, therapists, life coaches and trainers

## Checking for Signs of Struggle

### Warning Signs:

- Calling, texting or coming home significantly more or less than usual
- Reluctant or opposed to returning to school
- A major change in their mood or behavior
- The sense that something is “off”
- Drastic changes in the social circle or activities they enjoy
- Declining school performance – skipped classes, incomplete assignments, slipping grades
- Significant weight change (gain or loss)
- Without explanation asking for more money

**Checking 1-2** = This stage of life is full of change and adjustment. Continue to provide support, and watch that none of these signs worsen.

**Checking 3 or more** = It may be time for you to have an open discussion with your student to determine if there is a specific reason or cause behind these warning signs. Then work together to create a plan that will address the problem or concern. This may include seeking professional help.

