

Helping My Student Develop

When your student heads to college you will both be facing a time of transition. You are definitely still needed in their lives, but in a different way. The adjustments may differ if your student moves onto campus or commutes from home, but changes will occur, regardless. How you deal with these changes impacts how your student develops.

Trust – Being trusted gives a student more self-confidence, helps them stand up for themselves, and encourages them to rely on their own ability to handle situations. Trust also sends the message that “You can talk to me and I will respect you”.

A student who isn’t trusted will see college as an opportunity to get away with things, look to others for examples, and keep secrets that could be harmful for them.

Interest – You can remain interested in your student’s life and still take a step back. It is difficult for them to join a new community if you are constantly pulling them back into their old one. You can set the tone for this by asking about their life here without asking for so many details that they feel quizzed. Focus on things they are learning in class or activities on campus. Don’t always ask about grades!

Mistakes – Understand that they will make mistakes – we all do. That’s part of growing up and becoming independent. Let them feel your support in making their own decisions and in helping them find solutions if they make mistakes. If you provide all the answers or keep them afraid of taking a risk, they will not develop into the competent adults you want them to become.

Responsibility – Self-responsibility is a key part to student development and we expect them to be responsible for their choices, actions, and relationships. It is no longer up to you to “fix” things for them. Many people are available on campus to encourage and support your student as they learn to become independent or correct their errors. Even though you may want to give advice or direction, please don’t. Help them to seek answers or come up with options.

Wellness – This includes a lot of topics, but please encourage your student to make healthy choices. Food and rest are adjustment issues for most students. They have so many choices at the dining hall that they must learn to limit their intake and sleep is often neglected for fear of missing out on something exciting. Both of these are important to your student’s physical and mental health. It also impacts their ability to perform academically.

Other wellness topics include choices about alcohol and other drugs, exercise and activity, getting involved on campus, managing conflict and emotions, and developing health relationships.