

Learning to Let Go: Parents as Partners

Sending a child off to college can cause intense emotions for some parents. While you may be proud of your college bound student, you may still feel sadness over the fact that your child is growing up and moving away. In order to help you learn to let go, you should take comfort in the fact that you are still needed by your child. You are just needed in a different way. Your role as a parent is changing. Instead of parenting a child, you will now be parenting a young adult. With that said, you need to learn how to be a partner to your young adult in addition to being a parental figure. Here are some ways to establish an adult relationship with your college student without becoming a "helicopter" parent.

Be a good listener. During his freshman year, your college student will probably call you a lot to complain about his professors, roommate, schoolwork, etc. Unless he asks for your advice, don't start spouting off what you think he should or shouldn't do. Don't pass judgment; just try to lend a sympathetic ear.

Encourage problem solving. After you have listened to your student complain about a certain situation on campus, and he asks for advice, try to get him to come up with a solution. Ask open-ended questions that will initiate more discussion and help him come to a decision about what he should do. You may give your opinion if he really wants to know what you think, but let him decide the final outcome. His willingness to make a decision suggests that he is growing and maturing.

Trust your child. College is a time for students to develop their personal and professional identities, interests, and values. Even though you may want your child to make certain decisions, he may want something completely different from what you want. You need to trust that your child is making the right decision for him. Not everyone is the same, and college is a time for your student to grow as a person and find out who he is. By placing trust in your child, you are showing him that you respect his decisions even though you may not agree with them.

Provide support. One of the best ways to provide support to your college student is to send love from home. This can be in the form of emails, letters, cards, care packages, etc. These simple gestures will let your child know that you are thinking about him even though you aren't physically with him.

Find a time to connect. Remaining connected to your child while he is away at college is crucial in establishing an adult relationship. Try to set up a time each week to talk with your student on the telephone. Talk about worldly news, class discussions, and other adult-related topics. Having mature conversations with your child will allow him to see you as more than a parent. He may even consider you a friend.

Changing your parental role when your child goes off to college can be hard to do, but it is crucial in order to maintain a good relationship with your student. Since your student is growing up and becoming an adult, he no longer wants or needs you to tell him what to do. He does, however, need you to be a partner and sometimes even a mentor to him while he is becoming his own person and experiencing life at college.

<http://www.ecampustours.com/forparents/collegeplanning/learningtoletgo.htm>