

How To Help Your Parents "Let Go"

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As a new college student, you may have heard how your identity can change as you leave home to become an independent adult. As you begin this exciting journey, you can expect to encounter many changes in your life, both immediate and gradual. This exhilarating, yet fearful "flight" to another place can, at times, seem overwhelming. Believe it or not, this transformation has a huge effect on your parents as well.

When you leave for college, you have certain anxieties because you are entering a new scenario that is much different from the familiar atmosphere at home. You became comfortable living in the same place with the same people for many years. This is the beginning of a new life for you. Have you considered that the same is true for your parents? It is likely that your situation can be very hard for them, too.

It is important to be considerate of the unusual emotions and struggles that your parents are experiencing. Let them know that you understand their confused feelings and do not let them feel rejected. Try your best to make time for them by calling, writing, or even visiting home every now and then. Send them pictures of you and your friends at campus events. Keep them informed of things going on in your life. Strong communication is the key to helping them ease through this transition more smoothly.

Keeping in touch with your family is not only beneficial to them, but it will also be helpful to you. Even though you will make friends in college, it always feels good to share your thoughts, both positive and negative, with a parent who truly understands and can encourage you. It may also be a way of keeping up with news from your hometown.

Although regular chats with your parents are important, do not become too dependent on them. Remember that you are in the process of becoming a

self-sufficient adult, making your own decisions and accomplishing more tasks by yourself. For the first time, you must

find the proper balance between your responsibilities as a child and those as an adult.

Tips For Helping Your Parents "Let Go"

- Arrange a schedule to contact your parents and stick to it. Whether you promise to call or e-mail once a week or return home to visit once a month, you need to negotiate in advance how you will stay in contact with your parents. They have an eighteen year investment in you and it is natural that they will be curious about how things will work out. If you satisfy their curiosity, they will not spontaneously drop in on you.
- Share good news as well as bad. If your telephone calls or e-mails to your parents are one long whine, they will have a tendency to believe your life is falling apart. Make sure you balance the bad news with the good so that your parents get used to the idea that you can manage your own life.
- Learn how to handle your own problems. You will do better at college if you learn to negotiate with staff yourself. Relying on your parents to handle your housing bill or to complain about your roommate simply prolongs your childhood.
- Encourage your parents to visit your college at least once. Seeing you in your new context as a functioning adult helps your parents realize that you are a capable person. If your college has a parents' day, encourage your parents to attend. If nothing else, finding out that other parents have dealt with some of the same issues may alleviate some of their fears.
- Enlist other people, when necessary, to help you deal with your parents. Sometimes your parents will not believe you when you tell them that even an art major can find a job, or that your talent is in English literature rather than in physics. Professionals at your college deal with the anxieties of parents all the time. Encourage your parents to talk to them.