Balancing the college social scene and more difficult course work can be a big challenge for new students.

A parenting guide for the college years

By Helen E. Johnson and Christine Schelhas-Miller

Congratulations. Your child is ready to embark on that great personal journey called the college years. If you’re feeling a mixture of excitement and dread, you are not alone. Very few parents know quite what to expect.

What parent hasn’t asked: What is my role now that my child is away from home? Why does she seem independent one minute and confused and indecisive the next? How will I know if he is in trouble and, if so, what should I do about it?

Adding a new dimension to your parenting role

Recently there’s been a lot of talk about “letting go” when a child leaves for college. But rather than letting your child go, we believe you need to focus on letting your child grow. In fact, you can play an incredibly important role as the parent of a college student, especially during the first year.

Researchers have discovered that a specific style of parenting—one that provides warmth and support while encouraging independence—has an important effect on a college student’s academic performance and self-esteem.

In our years of working with parents and students, we’ve found that the most successful relationships occur when you are able to step back from being a controlling parent and shift your style to that of being a consultant. This means guiding your child through a process that will assist him or her in addressing daily problems, making difficult decisions and, one day, becoming fully independent.

The 24/7 electronic connection

Communication between students and their parents is dramatically different from what it was when you went to college. But just because you can be connected to your son or daughter 24/7 doesn’t mean it’s a good idea. Constant access can encourage an unhealthy involvement in every aspect of your child’s life. Knowing about moment-to-moment ups and downs makes it tempting to make decisions and solve problems that your child should be dealing with himself or herself.

Step back from being constantly in touch. Talk to your child about checking in a couple of times a week when you both have time for an in-depth conversation. Let your child know that you expect him or her to manage life on campus but that you’re available if problems or emergencies arise. Be honest: if you’re feeling good that your child calls you several times a day, it may be time to wean yourself.

Continued on page 2...
A parenting guide...

Taking your child to college

Whether you say goodbye at a residence hall or airport, you have probably anticipated, even dreaded, this moment. We’ve all witnessed arrival-day scenes of students with parents in tow: families looking confused and concerned, students trying to distance themselves from their parents and siblings.

Here’s what to do

► Have that meaningful conversation and tearful goodbye before you leave home.
► Make a rapid, graceful exit: a quick hug, preferably when no one else is around, and be on your way.
► Tour the campus and attend parents’ events on your own.
► Do something fun with the rest of your family.

Here’s what to avoid

► A drawn-out leave-taking. It will only make you and your college student miserable.
► Don’t be tempted to come back for one more goodbye. It’s guaranteed to be an unsatisfying experience for all.

Parents’ concerns

Whether you’re a single parent, a divorced parent or part of a blended or traditional family, you will surely feel the loss of one of your family members. And parents who make the trip to college alone, without a partner to share the experience, may feel the separation more intensely.

Most parents are concerned about issues of safety, adjustment and what the college culture might do to change their child. This is especially true for parents whose own college experience was different. In an earlier era, college staff acted more like surrogate parents, setting rules and enforcing them instead of treating students as quasi-adults. These days college campuses reflect the problems of the larger culture. They are no longer a protected place isolated from the larger world.

Just remember that you’ve laid the groundwork for growth and change through years of instilling values in your child. Our experience, which is supported by research on adolescent development, is that a majority of students finish their college years with their family’s core values intact.

This doesn’t mean that students will not try out other values and ideas during their college years. They will. But rest assured, the foundation you provided will remain strong, although you may have to struggle through some experimentation with new “looks,” taste in music, religious questioning and lifestyle adventures.

Dealing with stress

As students begin college, they will be adjusting to taking care of themselves, making new friends, finding a place in the social scene, and handling increased academic expectations. Everything is different—and many students miss the predictability of home and their high school friends.

Here’s what to do

► Listen to your child’s anxieties.
► Express your empathy for her or his situation.
► Let your child know that you care. Ask if you can be helpful.
► Express your confidence in and love for your child.

Here’s what to avoid

► Letting your concern for your child dominate the conversation.
► Dismissing her or his fears. Saying “Just stick it out. Everything will be okay.”
► Coming up with a solution before you’ve really listened and responded to your child’s feelings.
► Warning, threatening or moralizing: “If you don’t make friends soon, you’re really going to feel left out later.”

Drinking is still a problem

During your child’s high school years, you probably dealt with three big issues: drinking, drugs and sex. You talked, shared your values and monitored your child’s behavior. But when your son or daughter goes to college, these issues take on different meaning.

New freedoms and new responsibilities come with living away from home. Your child can make a vast array of choices away from your watchful eye. But just because it’s harder to control your child’s behavior doesn’t mean you’ve lost your influence on her or him. Most college students may be too cool to admit it, but they still want your approval and value your opinions on these issues.

While you want to trust your child to make reasonable, independent decisions, responsible parenting also includes making your expectations clear.

Here’s what to do

► Talk to your child about the issue of drinking on campus. Ask about the social culture. Ask what she or he thinks of college parties.
► Talk about what you mean by responsible drinking. Acknowledge that your child is in control of how she behaves and that you trust she will act responsibly.
► Remind your child of some possible consequences of drinking too much and breaking the law: getting arrested, having a record, the risk of alcohol poisoning.
► Be aware of signs that may indicate your child is abusing alcohol. Don’t be afraid to raise the subject. Start by saying, “I’m concerned about how much you are drinking. Are you concerned about it too?”

Here’s what to avoid

► Moralizing and lecturing.
► Being unrealistic. For example: “Just don’t go to any parties that serve alcohol to minors.”
► Encouraging the behavior by condoning your child’s drinking or joking with him or her about being a “party animal.”
► Supplying your child with liquor when you are visiting campus and drinking a lot yourself.
► Denying the problem. Glossing it over with “kids will be kids.”

Bookmark the college website

Events and changes are bound to occur on campus that will affect your child in some way. It could be a demonstration about a political issue or a change in academic or student life policy. If you don’t get the information you want from your child or from the administration, the college website is usually the best way to find out. You may want to read the student newspaper, which will likely be online as well, and some colleges also have parents’ offices and programs.

—Adapted from the authors’ book “Don’t Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money” (St. Martin’s Press). See page 8, We Recommend.
**RESEARCH REVIEW**

**Let’s look at each other and start talking**

In our high-tech, plugged-in world, we’re always communicating. Many young people have even learned a new skill: how to make eye contact with someone while they’re texting someone else. But amid all mobile connections that define our society, have we sacrificed conversation? We have, indeed, says MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle, a researcher on the ways people interact with technology and author of Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other.

“We are together, but each of us is in our own bubble, curiously connected to our keyboards and small touch screens,” she says. “At home, families sit together, texting and reading e-mail. People show up on the job wearing earphones. Big ones, like pilots. They turn their desks into cockpits.”

We use technology to keep each other at distances we can control—not too close, not too far, just right. Dr. Turkle calls it the “Goldilocks effect.”

And we want to believe that little “sips” of online connection add up to a big gulp of real conversation. But they don’t.

“Human relationships are rich; they are messy and demanding,” she says. “We have learned the habit of cleaning them up with technology. And the move from conversation to connection is part of this. But it’s a process in which we shortchange ourselves.”

Dr. Turkle observes that researchers around the world are “busy inventing sociable robots, designed to be companions to the elderly, to children, to all of us.” We’re drawn to technologies that provide the illusion of companionship without the demands of relationship.

“Always-on/always-on you-devices provide three powerful fantasies: that we will always be heard, that we can put our attention wherever we want it to be, and that we never have to be alone,” Dr. Turkle writes.

She encourages people to “create sacred spaces” at home: the kitchen and the dining room, for example. Or we might try to make our cars device-free zones.

“We can demonstrate the value of conversation to our children and we can do the same thing at work,” she says. ◆

—Adapted from The New York Times
Plan ahead for an elder health emergency

By Daniel G. Fish

Let’s say that you or an older relative were involved in an accident and found yourself in the Intensive Care Unit of a hospital. If everything you own is in your name alone, no one, not even a spouse, a son or a daughter, would have access to your bank account or your brokerage account. No one else could write checks to pay your rent, your mortgage or the premiums on your car and life insurance.

Set up Durable Power of Attorney for finances

One solution to this all-too-common dilemma would be to go to court and have a guardian appointed. But a simple guardianship order, which is what a relative would need to obtain, could take up to six months, and the legal fees would range between $5,000 and $10,000 or even more if there were complications.

A more practical alternative is to set up in advance a Durable Power of Attorney. This document allows you to appoint one or more individuals whom you trust to act for you in financial matters if you are unable to take action or make your own financial decisions.

This differs from other Powers of Attorney that end when the person loses mental capacity. The Durable Power of Attorney remains in effect for as long as you live provided you do not change it. When you die, your Last Will and Testament takes over.

How to go about it

Power of Attorney forms are readily available for $1 or so, and many states offer free forms that can be downloaded from their “dot-gov” websites. The cost to implement your Durable Power of Attorney would be only a few dollars to have the document notarized, and many banks offer their customers free notary service.

Each person appointed should sign the document, but the order of choice should be clearly indicated—and only one person should act at a time. If individuals are living in two states, it’s best to appoint, as first choice, someone in the state you spend most of your time in. The form will go into effect as soon as it is signed. Note that some financial institutions want you to use their own forms.

Once the form is signed and notarized, do not put it in a safe deposit box. The bank will act only if it has the original form. You’ll need to give copies to the agents named—and be sure to tell them where the original is located, in case something happens to you.

A Health Care Proxy for medical decisions

What would happen if you or an older relative no longer could make your own health decisions?

Many people assume they have taken care of this matter if they have a Living Will. But a Living Will applies only to a narrow band of medical events that occur under three specific conditions:

- If you are terminally ill,
- If there’s no hope of recovery, and
- If heroic measures are being considered.

On the other hand, a Health Care Proxy or a Power of Attorney for Health Care covers all medical situations and consent for all procedures. One or more persons is appointed to make medical decisions on your behalf, in the event that you are unable to make them yourself. Just be aware that these authorizations can only be used if two doctors certify that a person is unable to make medical decisions for himself or herself.

Checking to make sure his parents’ information is up to date.

How to go about it

This form doesn’t require notarization. You just need two witnesses over age 18 when you sign it. Copies are acceptable. It’s a good idea to give copies to all of the doctors you deal with and ask that it be put into your medical record.

If you have both a Living Will and a Health Care Proxy, the latter takes legal precedence. So it is very important to make sure that the person who is chosen knows your wishes and is willing to act as your advocate.

—The author is a principal in Daniel G. Fish, L.L.C., and is a post president of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys. This article is not intended as legal advice.
Making preschool and school separations easier

There’s nothing more heart wrenching on the first day of preschool than a 3-year-old hanging on to your leg crying, “Don’t go Mommy.”

It’s normal, even healthy, for a preschooler to experience some separation anxiety. “It would be a source of concern if a child never exhibited reluctance to separate from loved ones,” says child development specialist Dr. Lilian Katz. “And you would be an unusual parent if you didn’t experience mixed emotions at this time as well.”

**Parental concerns**

We want to help our kids meet new challenges and become independent, but it’s hard to see them growing up so fast and to realize they can get along without having us around all the time.

And sometimes, teachers say, it’s the parent who’s having more trouble separating than the child. In her book *Everyday Goodbyes*, Nancy Balaban cites the concerns of many parents: Can this teacher really take care of my child? Will she understand him when he makes requests? Will the teacher like her? What if my child misbehaves? Will they reveal things about our family that are private? What will happen if my child gets hurt in school? Can I really trust this person?

These nagging questions make it difficult for some parents to hand over their son or daughter to a teacher’s care.

**Look at the big picture**

Life is full of separations that make us sad, but it doesn’t mean they must be negative. In fact, there’s probably no more important skill we can learn in life than how to move with confidence from one experience to another.

By the time most kids start preschool, they have spent short or longer periods of time with caregivers, grandparents and other relatives. They’ve started on the road to discovering that mommy and daddy go away and always come back, that the world is a predictable place and they need not fear the unknown.

Think of separation as a learning experience, says Ellen Galinsky in *The Preschool Years*. “Goodbye also suggests hello to a new experience, a new person or to many people. It’s a point in life when children begin to learn about developing initiative, venturing out, trying new things.” Learning to handle separation is a step toward self-reliance and maturity.

Kids starting school also learn to trust new people in their lives. Day by day, familiarity in a new setting replaces the unknown. “Establishing comfort with the teacher as a base,” says Balaban, “enables children to become comfortable with the whole classroom.”

**Starting preschool**

The way children deal with separations depends on their age and stage of development, on how you feel and react, and on what the new experience entails. Here are some ideas to keep in mind.

### What are your expectations?

Some parents feel nervous about their child’s safety or conflicted about going back to work. Some have had negative school experiences themselves. When you communicate your own uncertainty about separation, it makes it harder for children to adjust to a new situation. Ambivalent feelings are also uncomfortable for parents. “When school begins,” says Balaban, “they may worry unduly about their children as a means of covering up, to themselves, their feelings of joy in their newfound freedom.”

### Watch what you say.

If you keep repeating, “Don’t worry, you’ll be all right,” your child may assume there’s something wrong. If you say, “I’ll miss you so much while you’re in school,” kids may feel you don’t want to be away from them—and they might even wonder if it’s okay for them to have fun in school.”

### What you do matters too.

A goodbye ritual can help your child feel secure enough to separate from you. It can be simple: blowing kisses to each other and saying a few special words or anything that seems appropriate and fun. Rituals give kids a degree of control over the goodbye process and make it easier for them to let you go.

Just be aware that, like saying goodbye to college students (see front page story), long farewells make a child anxious. So say your goodbyes and leave.

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**If your child is starting school this fall**

Make time this summer to read books to your child about starting preschool or kindergarten. Focusing on someone else’s experiences helps kids talk about their own feelings. There are good books also about making friends at a new school.

If a young child is going to be in a new building, try to pay a visit before starting school so he or she can see the classrooms, bathrooms, cafeteria, the office and the playground.

Make sure a kindergartner or first grader knows the following: his or her home address and phone number, how to manage a backpack, how to carry a tray with food on it, and how to handle small amounts of money. If possible, travel the route to school in your car, by bus and on foot.

Ease into fall routines a few weeks before school starts. If children have been sleeping late and eating at odd hours during the summer, they will need to get back into a routine in order to catch the early bus to school.

Try to keep your calendar relatively clear during September. Some kids who manage well during the day regress at night and may need extra time during this adjustment period.
How not to get tripped up by your own e-mail

By Dona J. Young

Over time, you may feel as if your coworkers are like family and that you are a permanent fixture at your company. Don’t let those cozy feelings get the better of you.

Your e-mail messages at the workplace are official documents. They can become evidence in a legal action, including those casual messages to your pals on the job.

Employers also have a legal right to monitor your e-mail. Companies can review any messages that you have sent or received. You have no right to privacy for your Internet use while you are on the job, even if you’re using a personal account.

Cyberspace is unforgiving

Once you click Send, your e-mail is out of your control. Anyone can forward it to anyone else, and deleted e-mail can be restored. Your words can be read out of context and, as everyone knows by now, online chatter can go viral in a flash.

To avoid a heart-breaking scenario, use all forms of electronic communications appropriately. Do not say or do anything that you would not want to have discussed on the national evening news or a morning talk show, and you’ll be safe.

Keep the human element

Don’t write things in an e-mail that you would not say to someone’s face. Remember, when we talk to each other, our body language and tone of voice provide cues. We feel listened to (or not) that you would not say to someone’s face. Remember, when we talk to each other, our body language and tone of voice provide cues. We feel listened to (or not)

Keep a positive focus

Even a good thing can sound menacing if it’s stated negatively or too abruptly, which is easy to do via e-mail. Make a conscious effort to stay positive and to focus on solutions.

Be aware that certain words can trigger a negative response: the word “policy,” for example. So write around those words that irk people. And when you talk about errors, the passive voice is more tactful. Instead of saying, “You made a mistake on the June invoice,” say instead, “A mistake was made on the June invoice.”

Best e-mail practices

■ Start your message with the most important information. Put your purpose up front. Clearly state what you need from the reader.

■ Respond to e-mail within a day or two, even to simply acknowledge that you received it.

■ Wait about two days after you send a message to follow up on an unmet request.

■ Don’t waste people’s time. Don’t “cc” lots of people unless they are truly in the loop. And do not press “reply all” until you’re sure that everyone needs to receive the message.

■ Include a note at the top of a group message stating that only you should receive a reply. If you use group lists, do not show the e-mail addresses of the recipients.

■ Forward a message rather than use “bcc,” to keep the communication above board. Add a note at the beginning of your forward to explain the action a reader should take.

■ Avoid slang and profanity. Be aware that sarcasm doesn’t travel well either. Resist the urge to pass along jokes or humorous messages.

■ Don’t respond to an emotional or controversial message. Ask yourself: Is this a good time to pick up the phone or walk across the hall to talk to someone?

■ When in doubt, don’t send the message. Even a short pause can be time enough to realize you’re about to make a mistake. A too-hasty response can have, long-lasting consequences.

An effective response may require more information, greater clarity and a good night’s sleep.

■ Encrypt credit card numbers and other sensitive information. If you don’t know how to do this, search for the keywords “sending sensitive information by e-mail.”

■ Edit your e-mail for spelling, punctuation and clarity. Remove unnecessary information. No one likes having to work hard trying to figure out how to respond to a poorly constructed e-mail.

—The author facilitates training programs to improve communication on the job (www.thewriterstoolkit.com). This was adapted from her book “Angry E-mail: How To Put a Lid On It.”

It’s easier to slip up when e-mailing is part of a multi-tasking moment.
A heart-smart diet needs healthy fats

In a newly revised food guide from the American Heart Association (AHA), you may be surprised to find that “low fat” is out and “healthy fats” are in.

Foods like nuts and fish are high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. They are an important part of a heart-healthy diet.

But it’s not enough to just add something healthy to your diet. You need to take something out that is less healthy at the same time, says Alice H. Lichtenstein, D.S.C., director of the Tufts University Cardiovascular Nutrition Lab.

“The emphasis should be on displacing saturated fat and trans fat with unsaturated fat, particularly polyunsaturated fat,” says Lichtenstein.

A 2011 “Consumer Attitudes about Nutrition Survey” suggests that most people “get it” about heart-healthy omega-3 fats. But people are still confused over which spreads and cooking oils are the healthiest choices. Experts suggest:

Pick cooking oils that are liquid at room temperature.
Read labels and avoid saturated and trans fats.
The good (unsaturated) fats are mainly found in liquid vegetable oils such as olive, soybean, corn, safflower, canola and sunflower oil.

Don’t overdo even the healthy fats, because they add calories. And eating less “bad fat” doesn’t improve your diet if you replace it with carbohydrates such as sugar or refined grains.

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Score yourself on wellness and safety

If you’re like most people, you do well on some measures of health and personal safety—and not so well on others.

The scorecard below, drawn from the “U.S. Healthy People Initiative,” measured the nation’s progress toward meeting established goals. Check yourself out.

Are you doing better than average in the following areas?

Exercise. The average minutes of moderate exercise a day for U.S. adults: 26 for men, 19 for women.
The goal: at least 150 minutes a week of moderate activity (biking, walking, gardening) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity.

Weight. The average U.S. body mass index (BMI) is 28 for men and women.
The goal: A BMI (correlating weight to height) of less than 25 and waistline of 37 inches for men and 32 inches for women.

Diet. The average daily servings of fruit and vegetables: less than three

for men, less than four for women.
The goal: at least two to four daily servings of fruit and three to five daily servings of vegetables. Both provide disease-fighting benefits and help avoid excess weight gain.

Alcohol. Adults who drink more than is healthy: 28 percent.
The goal: Do not speed. Do not talk on your cell phone or text while driving. Do not tailgate.

Biking. Cyclists who wear helmets for all or most trips: 35 percent.
The goal: Wear a helmet that fits snugly, sits level on your head and does not tilt forward or cover your eyes. Replace a helmet that was in a crash, whether or not you can see any damage. A proper fitting helmet can prevent up to 88 percent of bicycle-related brain injuries.

Flu Shots. Adults who get flu vaccine during flu season: about 41 percent.
The goal: A flu shot every year, as soon as it’s available. Even if it doesn’t prevent the flu, it can ease symptoms—and it reduces the chance of your spreading the disease as well.

—Adapted from Consumer Reports on Health

Bottom line on blueberries: a super all-season option

Nutritionally, blueberries really do deliver the goods. They are a rich source of vitamin C, potassium and fiber. It’s best to eat them fresh, but frozen, dried or canned blueberries work well too.

Here’s a Q&A below based on research on blueberries.

Does cooking blueberries affect their antioxidant content? Apparently not. In a 2009 study, microwaved, simmered, pan-fried or baked blueberries showed no significant loss in antioxidants. Pan frying for a short time actually increased antioxidant activity, possibly because the heat breaks down cell walls, releasing antioxidants. (That happens to carrots also.)

What about freezing? A study from Australia found that blueberries frozen for up to three months still had high levels of antioxidants.

Do organic blueberries have more antioxidants? Organically grown blueberries have been found to contain more plant chemicals and antioxidant activity than conventionally grown blueberries, according to a USDA study. But there was wide variation from farm to farm.

What are the health benefits? In lab studies of red, blue and purple foods, blueberries have consistently shown blood sugar-lowering, anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, anti-cancer and other beneficial effects.
It’s a ‘Dr. Spock’ for the parents of college students

As your child heads off to school this fall, you may wonder what it means to be the parent of a legally adult college student today.

A wonderful guide by Helen E. Johnson and Christine Schelhas-Miller, written in 2001 and revised and updated recently, can help you understand your evolving role during the college years.

The authors have worked professionally with college students and their parents, and they offer advice that is grounded in sound development theory and research. Full of practical examples and dialogues, each topic has sections called “What’s on your mind,” “What’s on your child’s mind,” “What’s going on,” “What to do,” “What to avoid” and “What you need to know.” (See front page feature.)

This comprehensive resource covers an amazing array of issues including:

- **Preparing yourself and your child for the transition to college:** what to bring and how to handle money.
- **Adjustment in the first year:** roommates, fraternity parties, all-nighters, changing majors and hanging out.
- **The search for identity and autonomy.** Is your child confident, confused or coasting?
- **Lifestyle and value decisions.** Understanding the college experience these days. Has Google completely replaced the library? Confidentiality of healthcare services. Resources to call on.
- **The 24/7 connection:** How a generation of “helicopter parents” can learn to handle the electronic umbilical cord that provides constant access to their children.
- **Handling crises,** feelings of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, dropping out.

There is down-to-earth, wise and sensible advice on all these topics and more. This book really lives up to its subtitle: “the essential parenting guide to the college years.”

*Don’t Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money* (St. Martin’s Griffin, soft cover, $21.99) is available in bookstores and online.◆