

**HAMPTON UNIVERSITY  
STUDENT COUNSELING CENTER**

*TIPS FOR LETTING GO  
OF YOUR COLLEGE-BOUND BELOVED*

**Honor your mixed feelings**

Happiness    Excitement    Pride    Grief    Fear    Doubt    Hold on – Let go

**Create a climate of increased autonomy during senior year in high school**

Teach your student the skills of budgeting and record keeping (get help if you don't do well with these yourself), laundry, time management (balancing school, part-time jobs, friends, household chores, and sleep – students have to do these things in college), and getting to bed and getting up and out to school on his/her own.

**Be specific and realistic about what you will and will not pay for** now and once college begins. State your expectations about how the money you do provide will be spent. If you fuss and cuss, and then give or send more money, what is the real message you are sending?

Living in a small dormitory room with a total stranger in a building filled with other students making the same adjustments is very challenging. Help your student to practice taking the perspective of others – “Put yourself in his/her position and consider other ways to see and feel about a situation.” A great deal of students' distress is generated by the belief that the way they experience a situation is the right way, rather than merely one way.

**Get comfortable surrendering control**

If you haven't heard it already, prepare to hear, “I'm an adult; let me make my own mistakes!”

“Yes, but is it really safe for me to give up control?” (a.k.a. “help,” “guidance” etc.) If you have been in total or near total control, scale back starting now.

- The University expects students to become their own managers.
- Privacy and confidentiality policies prohibit disclosure of some types of information about your 18 and older child, without a written release of information from him/her.

“Who am I if I am not closely guiding and protecting this child (these children)?”

- Upgrade taking care of yourself.
- Talk about the transition experience with your own support system(s).
- Try a new project or interest.
- Talk to your student about what it is like for you to make changes in the way you have carried out your role with him/her.

### **Tips for letting go once the transition to college has taken place. Prepare to:**

**Give your child a clear sense of your support**, even if you have not been close.

**Be available, but do not intrude.** Let your child take the lead in the frequency, length and type of communication. Remember that you are building a new level of adult – adult relationship. Try not to take distance / silence personally. Start conversations on an upbeat note. Keep a list of important conversation items near the phone so that you can raise them in an orderly way. Make a note of outcomes and/or decisions. They may become useful reminders later on.

**Be a shoulder to cry on** – listen non-judgmentally – but resist trying to solve the problem(s), even though every fiber in your being may be longing to be super Mom, Dad, Grandmother, etc. to the rescue – just this last time.

HOWEVER, when you hear clear indications of him/her being in crisis and not able to manage, do follow your intuition and knowledge to ensure safety.

**Send care packages** such as snacks, quarters, news clippings, flowers, inspirational sayings, pictures and photos, ear plugs and sleep masks (no joke!), etc.

**Avoid burdening your child** with problems at home over which she/he has no control.

**Encourage your student to get involved in extra-curricula activities;** for example, one academic club, one service project, or one social or self-expression group. This will promote broadening networks and development of new skills and strengths.

**Encourage your student to ask questions of their professors**, and visit them during their office hours, or ask for an appointment if schedules conflict. It conveys interest in the course, and will help professors to make a personal connection with the student.

**Ask about courses and the content being learned rather than grades.** Students spend incredible amounts of time and emotional energy calculating grades and “what (I) need to get on this test, or in this course. Moreover, “*get*” thinking undermines accountability and responsibility for the disciplined, academic labor required for *earning* the desired grades.

**Support rather than dominate your Hampton student’s decision making about choosing his/her major** even if you ‘don’t get it,’ or would prefer something else.

Armstrong-Slater Building      757-727-5617; 727-637-2375 (fax)    8:00-5:00 Mon-Fri  
Emergency after hours: call University Police, 727-5666

**Monitor and moderate your expressions of loss or grief** so that children who are still at home don't feel that you over-value your new Hamptonian. Also, avoid trying to turn one of them into his or her clone.

**Avoid telling your student that these are the best years of his/her life.** Not only do you not know whether this is or will be true, they may actually be the hardest years he/she has ever experienced. (There will be things about the first few weeks here – temporary curfew, for example – that our new students dislike intensely. Empathize, offer reassurance, but try to avoid feeding into the frustration. They survive, and sometimes see the value . . . later on.) Do encourage him/her to explore resources and constructive experiences and friendships that will help to make these the best years . . . so far.

**Continue mental health care if your child has a mental health history (including ADHD, depression, problems with alcohol / drugs, and 'acting out'.)** Do not assume that college will somehow cause it to resolve itself. If there is a long-term problem that is still showing up, it may break wide open in the next couple of years, so be sure that in your travels around the campus, you and your new Hamptonian at least lay your eyes on the Student Counseling Center. Disclose psychiatric medications on the health form the University will require in the matriculation process. Emphasize the importance of continuing the medication.

**“Don't worry; be happy.”** Sometimes it is easier to get into an argument than to say goodbye. When it is time to drop your student off, don't sweat the small stuff. Breathe and relax your facial muscles into smiles, and let your heart follow suit.