

Supporting a Successful College Transition

Objectives

- Discuss strategies for supporting a loved one's successful transition (or return) to college
- Learn and review helpful resources for continuing mental health care while at school
- Converse and connect with fellow Dorm parents

Roughly 14% of students cited mental health as the primary reason they had to withdraw from their studies.

- Forbes EQ, 2023

Determining Readiness

How do you know when your child is ready to start or return to college?

- **Ask them**
 - Discuss your child's feelings about college with them. Do they feel ready? Why now?
 - Be aware of your child's academic goals
- **Consult with your coach**
 - Discuss your child's readiness for college in parent coaching.
 - Your child's coach can give helpful insight into their signals of readiness.
- **Track progress**
 - What **evidence** do you observe that your child is (or is not) ready for college?
 - Things to consider: keeping track of their own appointments, sleep hygiene, completed all start/return to school work, use of adaptive coping skills, relationship w/ nutrition
 - Do you see progress toward goals your family set at the beginning of treatment?
 - Are **they taking active steps** to move towards enrollment and preparing for return to school?
 - Such as accommodations requests, course registration, placement exams, required paperwork

Boundaries & Expectations

Boundary Setting and Expectations

As a parent, it is natural to have expectations for how your child's college transition will go, especially if you are also financially supporting their education. In addition to ***communicating these expectations***, it may also be beneficial to set boundaries around your support or limits to your involvement in your child's education.

Examples of areas you may want to set boundaries around:

- Frequency of communication while at school
- Information about grades, assignments, class attendance etc.
- FERPA and other privacy issues
- Living arrangements and roommates
- Class withdrawal deadlines/notice

Before initiating a conversation about boundaries it is a good idea to be prepared. Do some introspection. Ask yourself, "What are my needs throughout this process?" or "What would make me feel comfortable?"

Talk with your parent coach about boundaries & expectations

Dos and Don'ts of Boundary Setting

Do

- Be clear, intentional, and flexible
- Use "I" statements to communicate needs/expectations
- Set consequences for breaching boundaries (and follow through!)
- Respect your child's boundaries
- Lean into discomfort

Don't

- Issue ultimatums
- Set unrealistic expectations
- Use blaming language
- Dominate the conversation
- Over-explain your reasoning

Making a Plan

Continuing Mental Health Care While at School

Supportive Strategies

It is important to normalize that college is designed to be challenging, and it can be particularly difficult to manage while caring for mental health. As a parent, you can support your child by developing a plan with them for how they will prioritize their mental health needs while at school.

Some other strategies for helping your child succeed include:

- Encouraging healthy habits (sleep, nutrition, exercise, use of technology, etc.)
- Practice discussing their mental health with professors and school administrators
- Get connected to **resources before** the school year begins (*more on next slide)
- Reinforce time-management skills & executive functioning skills
- Encourage extracurricular involvement & building relationships

...but, most importantly, BE available for emotional support.

Remember It is **not** your job to do your child's schoolwork. Nor are you setting them up for success when you manage their own work.

Common On-Campus Resources

1

Counseling Center

Most universities offer a number of counseling sessions for students per semester included with tuition. These resources often serve more as a connection to care, unless otherwise specified.

2

Academic Accommodations Office

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public colleges and universities to provide accommodations for students with disabilities

*note helpfulness of neuropsych testing to support application

3

Title IX Office

Title IX requires schools to adopt and publish procedures for students to report incidents of sexual violence

4

Student Organizations

Many universities have student organizations that host programming surrounding health and wellness

Other Resources to Consider

1

Therapy

Stay connected to a therapist and schedule weekly sessions

2

Executive Functioning Skills & Coaching Support

Utilize skills to support executive functioning and engage in clinical coaching for additional academic support.

3

Psychiatry

Client discuss with their psychiatrist any relevant medications or needs related to being present at school. Attend monthly psychiatry appointments (work to a less frequent number when possible).

4

Group Therapy & Peer Support

There are numerous benefits to group therapy services (ex: learning new skills, instillation of hope, developing interpersonal effectiveness, catharsis) and strong evidence that supports the role connection has in overall mental health and wellness.

Parent Resources

- **The Dorm Parent Support Group**
- **University Parent Facebook Groups**
 - Most universities offer Facebook groups for parents of their students
 - Great way to stay up to date and foster community
- **The Parent Support Network - Mental Health America**
 - Free, confidential meetings for parents of children (ages 1-25)
- **NAMI Support Groups**
 - Virtual and in-person; offerings vary by state
- **Family Day**
 - Many universities host family days each school year
 - Opportunity to meet your child's peers, professors and other supporters

Making a plan...

And sometimes it is in the best interest of your loved one to decide to *not* return to school.

This may mean they are:

- Taking or extending a leave of absence
- Needing more time to focus primarily on mental & behavioral health concerns
- Unsure if they wish to return to school / considering other vocational options
- Taking a reduced course load or a class elsewhere while on leave
- Others?

It may be hard for some parents (and young adults) to recognize that returning to school before someone is truly ready to do so can have **detrimental** effects.

There can be a misbelief that if someone takes time off they will *“never go back to school.”*

On the contrary, we see that returning to school before someone is prepared may negatively affect the young adult and contribute to lower self-esteem, increased mental health symptoms, increased feelings of isolation and disconnection, as well as poor school performance, the need to drop classes, and/or possibly take additional leaves of absence/withdrawal from school

Discuss further with your parent coach!

Discussion Questions

1. How can you as a parent balance your involvement in your child's education while respecting your child's independence?
2. What boundaries do you foresee being important to discuss with your child before the transition to college?
3. What works have you done, or need to do, on your own to prepare *yourself* for your child's transition to college?