

FOR PARENTS



Parental Concerns
Don't know whom to call?
Start with us.
Admissions/Orientation
(843) 349-2188
Kingston Hall

The new semester is approaching quickly, and soon it will be time for your son or daughter to leave their familiar environment and begin a new phase of adulthood. This will be a year of many transitions for your student and your family. These adjustments will be easy for some and not as easy for others.

As parents begin to realize that their son or daughter will soon enter a whole new world, it's natural to want to hold on tight and not let go. It is wise to keep in mind that a period of adjustment will take place as the patterns of family communication and relationships change.

Your son or daughter will deal with many changes in his or her life. Some of the changes may include a new place to live, a new and different circle of friends, and new academic approaches and expectations. Amid the excitement and anticipation of entering their new environment, college students must learn to balance their time between academics and social/personal activities.

During this period of transition, your student will adjust to the workload of new and different classes, as well as the day-to-day activities such as laundry and meals. As a result, he or she may feel stress and express frustration. Increased freedom and responsibility may bring a few changes in

your student's attitudes and approach to communication.

The key to a successful transition is open communication. Your student wants to know that you are available to listen and understand if a crisis arises. However, the student's newly acquired self-confidence may manifest itself as aloofness, inconsiderateness or restlessness. Homesickness and loneliness can creep up on a student, even if he or she is busy all the time.

Being aware of the inevitable changes that are a part of the college experience will help parents provide valuable support for their son or daughter during his or her stay at Coastal Carolina University. Remember to listen to your student and keep an open mind. Take time to learn enough about the University to know what your student is experiencing, but try to step back and allow him or her to stretch to meet the many challenges and opportunities for personal and intellectual growth. Reassure your student that success is an attainable goal for those who apply themselves and, as parents, you can take pride in the success of your son or daughter.



**Parenting A
College Student**
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RULE #1 - WRITE (EVEN IF THEY DON'T WRITE BACK)

Although new college students are typically eager to experience the independence of being away from home, this newfound freedom may be misinterpreted as rejection by parents who are sensitive. Most first-year students, although 99 percent won't ever admit it, appreciate news from home and family, however mundane it may seem to you.

Few things are more depressing than a week of empty mailboxes. Families should not expect to receive a reply for every letter written to the student. The you-write-one, they-write-one sequence is not always followed by college students, so be prepared for some unanswered correspondence.

RULE #2 - ASK QUESTIONS (BUT NOT TOO MANY)

First-year college students are "cool" (or so they think) and have a tendency to resent interference with their new lifestyle; however, most still desire the security of knowing that their family is still interested in them.

Parental curiosity can be perceived as obnoxious and alienating or relief-giving and supportive,

depending on the attitudes of the people involved. The "I-have-a-right-to-know" approach to questions should be avoided. However, honest inquiries and other "between friends" types of communication and discussion will do much to further the parent-student relationship.

RULE #3 - EXPECT CHANGE (BUT NOT TOO MUCH)

Your son or daughter will change either drastically within the first months, slowly through the four-year span, or at a pace somewhere between the two. It is natural and inevitable and can even be inspiring and beautiful. Often, however, it can be challenging for parents.

College and the associated experiences can affect changes in social, vocational and personal behavior and in choices the student must make. An up-to-now wallflower may become a fraternity sweetheart, a pre-med student may discover that biology is not his or her choice after all, or a high school radical may become a college egghead.

You cannot stop change—you may not even

understand it—but it is within your power (and to your and your student's advantage) to accept that change will occur. Remember that your son or daughter is basically the same person you sent away to school, aside from possibly a few changes in interests and personality revisions. Do not expect too much, too soon, as maturation is not an instantaneous or overnight process. You may even discover your student returning home with some of the habits and hang-ups, however unsophisticated, that you thought he or she had outgrown. Your son or daughter is developing his or her own way of doing things—just be patient.

RULE #4 - DON'T WORRY (TOO MUCH) ABOUT MOOD SWINGS IN TELEPHONE CALLS OR LETTERS

Parenting can be a thankless job, especially during the college years. The give-and-take process sometimes seems to be a bit unbalanced.

Often when troubles become somewhat overwhelming for a first-year student (a failed test, an ended relationship and a shrunken T-shirt all in one day), the best place to turn for a sympathetic response is home. Unfortunately, this is the only time that some students feel the strong urge to communicate. Parents may never get to hear about the "A" paper, the new friend or the domestic triumph. In these times of "crisis," your student can unload troubles or tears and, after the catharsis,

return to his or her routine, relieved and lightened, while you inherit the burden of worry.

Parents of commuter students may look forward to an almost daily challenge of attempting to diagnose the level of trauma and offering the appropriate dosage of relief.

Be patient with those "nothing-is-going-right-I-hate-this-place" telephone calls or letters. You are providing a valuable service by dispensing advice, lending a sympathetic ear or, at times, even feeling like a punching bag. Granted, it is a service that may make you feel lousy, but it works wonders for a frustrated student.

RULE #5 - VISIT (BUT NOT TOO OFTEN)

Parental visits, especially when accompanied by shopping sprees and/or dining out, are another part of the first-year that new students reluctantly admit to liking but in most cases appreciate greatly.

These visits give the student a chance to introduce some of the important people in both of his or her now-important worlds of home and school to each other. It also is a way for parents to become familiar with, and hopefully more under-

standing of, their student's new activities, commitments, and friends.

Spur-of-the-moment "surprises" are usually not appreciated. Preemption of a planned weekend of studying or other activities could have disastrous results. It is usually best to wait for an invitation or the Family Weekend activities to see your student and the school – that way you may even get to see a clean room.



FOR PARENTS

RULE #6 - DO NOT TELL YOUR STUDENT: "THESE ARE THE BEST YEARS OF YOUR LIFE"

The first year of college, and the other three as well, can be full of indecision, insecurities, disappointments and, sometimes, mistakes. They also are full of discovery, inspiration, good times and exciting people. Sometimes it may not always be the good that stands out, except in retrospect.

It sometimes takes a while (and often the help of good friends) to realize that this is normal, and that the afternoon movie and paperback novel perceptions of college life are not very accurate. It also may take a while for some students to accept that sometimes being unhappy, afraid and confused, and that disliking some people and making mistakes are all part of the show, all part of this new reality, all part of growing up. In other words,

accepting one's self takes a little time, and it may take even a while longer for some parents to accept.

Parents who believe that all college students get good grades, know what major they want to choose, and always have activity-packed weekends, thousands of close friends, and lead carefree, worry-free lives are wrong. So are the parents who think that college educated means mistake-proof. Parents who perpetrate and insist upon the "best years" stereotype are working against their child's difficult struggle with self-development. Parents who accept and understand the highs and lows of their son's or daughter's reality are providing support and encouragement where it is needed most.

RULE #7 - TRUST THEM

Finding oneself is a difficult enough process without feeling that the people whose opinions your son or daughter respects most are second-guessing his or her own second-guessing.

A student once expressed that one of the most important things his mom ever wrote to him in four years of college was this: "I love you and want

for you all the things that make you the happiest; and I guess you, not I, are the one who knows best what those things are."

The mother wrote the above passage during the student's senior year. If you are smart you will believe it, mean it...and say it now.

