



PARENTING  
PARADOX

**I had to wake myself up for school.**

**They were flexible with my curfew.**

**They let life be my teacher.**

**They didn't shame me for my grades. Instead, they talked to me about why I got the grade and what I could do to improve my approach.**

## Transitioning from High School to College

College applications are finally finished and submitted. The process was brutal. Your high school senior is barely talking to you, and you are thankful. You aren't so crazy about them right now either. Worst of all . . .it's not over. Now comes the long, arduous wait. Accepted? Rejected? Everyone is on pins and needles.

Rest assured, while it doesn't feel like it right now, the pain will soon be over, May 1st to be exact, the deadline for paying the deposit for your offspring's selected school. With that also comes the realization that your "child no more" is leaving the nest, is venturing out into this great big world. Of course, they have likely been reminding you of this for years. "I can't wait until I'm 18 and can make my own decisions!" Sound familiar?

One semester of high school left, graduation in May, and college in August. Is your child adequately prepared? Have you been proactive enough in fostering the skills that they will need to succeed in this next stage of life? While much of what they learn is from observing those around them, there are some specifics a parent can do.

### *What college students have to say:*

We are all familiar with the opinion that we are supposed to be raising children who are independent, resilient, and civic-minded. We're to avoid raising children who are needy, irresponsible, and self-serving. But parenting is a series of actions and inactions, victories and epic failures, the equivalent of compounding interest, if done early enough has tremendous payoff. So what can parents be doing while in the home stretch, parenting their second semester high school senior to help facilitate a healthy and successful transition to college? We went to the experts, students currently enrolled in college, and asked . . . What did your parents do well that helped prepare you for college?

### *I had to wake myself up for school.*

**Why this is important:** Being responsible for getting out of bed on your own allows your child to practice a multitude of skills. These include the use of time management so they get their homework completed, not to mention the self-discipline to stop binge watching *Game of Thrones* and get some sleep (a recommended 8 hours per night for high school students). In addition, they're responsible for using technology such as the alarm on their phone to manage their lives, which translates later into setting reminders for appointments, creating a calendar for upcoming tests and papers, and don't forget the ultimate goal, after graduation, knowing when their next shift at work begins. The most obvious benefit to this is practicing self-starting, without the bullhorn that many parents resort to. If you have been waking your child up for school all along, know that success with changing your and your child's habits will not happen overnight. Problem solve with them about what supports they need to be successful. Purchase any technology needed, perhaps agree to 1 reminder to get up in the beginning, but then be prepared to let the logical consequences occur. While you may not have considered it, they can always take a taxi to school (on their own dime). They have to figure things out now. Better your child learn now than miss their 8 a.m. class 10 times (Unfortunately, tuition isn't prorated for missed classes. You're still paying for them!).

### *They were flexible with my curfew.*

**Why this is important:** In just a few months your child will be graduating from high school, and before you can blink, they will be waving good-bye as you pull away leaving them at college. In college, they will have no curfew, no one to wake them up, no one to tell them what to do, and no one to make sure they followed through with their responsibilities. Before they are ready for that much freedom, they need to practice with freedom. Having a flexible curfew for this final semester of high school is a perfect opportunity for that practice. Let your senior request time they think is reasonable to come in, but make sure you have responsibilities for them the following day. For example, you can set a mutually agreed upon curfew that night while keeping in mind that they are picking up Grandma for her 10 a.m. yoga class. Giving them responsibilities the next day helps them make decisions about what they should do . . . or not do . . . the night before. You can easily extend this practice by having them do the family grocery shopping or taking the dog to his vet appointment, any task that has a specific time component. Give them practice with freedom and responsibilities with deadlines while living at home so the freedom that college affords does not become a crash course in unmitigated chaos.

### *They let life be my teacher.*

**Why this is important:** Whew, in today's world this is one of the most difficult parts of parenting, allowing your child to learn on their own at times when it's developmentally appropriate. When we allow opportunities where our child may potentially fail, the child learns through trial and error to use impulse control, to prepare themselves for potential hurt, to turn to peers for guidance. But watching it unfold and allowing your child to learn without providing commentary, critical looks, or asking a barrage of questions can be challenging. Parents have lived and learned, we have the perception that we know so much more than they do, we want to protect our child from possible harm, we assume if they leave our household with our advice stored in their brain, they'll be safe. But it's time to let your teen navigate their own paths so they're not blowing up your phone freshman year of college or even worse, failing to not ask for guidance from anyone and freezing in their new environment. Reporting every situation to you, asking you for advice regarding every conflict they encounter keeps them from developing independence and confidence in their own decision making.

### *They didn't shame me for my grades. Instead, they talked to me about why I got the grade and what I could do to improve my approach.*

**Why this is important:** Imagine this. You are managing multiple tasks at work, but there's one task you just don't put your all into. Maybe you've jumped on the latest New Year's diet or gym membership and lack energy, or maybe you've taken on too much but know that you have to see this project through, even though you are finding it hard to focus. As a result, you give this project 60% effort, and your boss notices. But instead of yelling at you, running through a list of your mistakes, or firing you, she asks what happened, helps you connect your choices with your performance, and works with you to problem-solve, thus avoiding a repeat performance. Your boss does this because she recognizes your strengths and is willing to put time into helping you succeed further rather than just firing you for a lapse in productivity. It's really that simple when addressing missteps with our children. When approaching your child about grades or performance stop and think: If my child were my employee, how would I handle the situation? If that scenario doesn't work for you, pretend you are speaking to your niece or nephew, not your child. Doing this allows you to focus on the real issues rather than getting caught up in the emotions parents can feel. As we all know, motivation from within comes from a calmer approach to underachievement. Shaming leads to the child feeling victimized and takes attention away from the issue at hand.

### *Don't Fret*

At the end of the day, it's good to remember the adage, "Patience is a virtue." Be patient with yourself and be patient with your children. Parenting can be hard, but it can also be rewarding. You are on the precipice of your offspring becoming a full-fledged adult. Enjoy it!