



# Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**  
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## And They're Done!

So, your little bird is about to leave the nest. Fly the coop. Get shoved out the door.

A whole gaggle of graduating seniors has just one summer left before they head off to college. And head off, they should. I'm all for kids going away to college. Or, if they choose to stay local, they should at least live in the dorms, if at all possible.

College will probably be one of the most important experiences in your child's life. Having to face a watered-down version of the big, cruel world is just what he needs at this point in his life. As parents, you have the next three months to make sure your child is equipped to face the excitement and challenges of college.

By the time your child leaves for college, he/she should:

### **Know how to manage time and be responsible for school activities.**

Beginning in high school, you should decrease your monitoring of homework, and schedules. By graduation time, your child should have solid studying habits in place and know how to organize his time. You should have been weaning her off of you for several years - from actively watching your child do her homework at the table with her, to being in the same room as she does it, to getting her to bring it to you when it's done for a check, to asking her if it's done and if she's happy with it, to not asking at all.

Same thing with the schedule - by the time kids hit middle school, they should be getting themselves up and ready in the morning and looking at the calendar to see what activities they and the rest of the family have going on for the next few days. It can't be your job to remind them about everything. No one

in college is going to care if they come to class much less if they remember to do their homework. It is up to the student to get whatever he can out of college - there will be no handholding. Do your child a favor and make sure they are already accustomed to that before college.

### **Understand the way the world works. Choices lead to consequences.**

Good choices typically lead to good consequences. This means parents must get out of the way and let kids deal with the natural consequences of their decisions. For example, forgetting your gym suit leads to points off, which leads to a poor grade in a class that is a no-brainer "A," which SHOULD lead to negative consequences at home. No parent should be racing to school to bring the forgotten gym suit. All that teaches the child is that you will rescue him: no need to get more organized - just call mom!

It's difficult to let your child suffer the natural consequences of his decisions. You've spent a lifetime trying to prevent things from happening - feeding them as infants before they got hysterically hungry, grabbing them just as they were about to fall down, telling them what will happen if they don't settle down ("you could poke your eye out!"). Part of the parenting shift must be that you get out of the way so your child can think for him/herself.

### **Be financially responsible.**

By the time kids hit their sophomore year of high school, they should be making their own money and managing it. They need to have a savings or checking account, and know how to balance it. Better for them to bounce a few checks now in the security of home

sweet home. They also need to be paying their own bills - car insurance, gas, cell phone, clothes and toiletries, etc., or at least a portion of these expenses.

### **Know the basics of running a household.**

Every teen should know how to wash clothes, clean house, grocery shop, cook (at least the basics). You are doing such a disservice to your child if you do not teach them these things. Then get out of the way and let them do what you've taught them. I know, I know. Many of us like a clean house, and they won't do as good of a job as you. So what?! You'll live if the bed isn't made perfectly, or if dinner is a bit salty. They need these skills to survive and not be dependent on anyone else (Dependence on others often leads to poor relationship choices along with all pink clothes!)

So, there is Keri's basic primer for parents of college-bound kids. I am definitely in favor of shoving the little darlings out of the nest and resting confidently in the knowledge they are truly ready to soar!