



Parenting Your College Graduate

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It is hard to believe that graduation is fast approaching. Parents commonly express feelings of joy, pride, relief, angst, and worry – with varying degrees of each of these emotions leading up to, occurring during, and lingering after graduation.

A Time of Significant Transition

Your graduate might be returning home to live for an unknown period of time or perhaps only briefly before heading off to his or her next life experience. Your son or daughter will be exhausted during the first few days at home -- and many recent graduates share that they feel stir crazy without the rhythm of college life guiding their days and nights. You might find that your graduate seems careless, short-tempered, nervous, apathetic, anxious, and fluctuate in his or her emotions from minute-to-minute.

A Time of Stress

To reduce family stress it is important to share your expectations with your son or daughter, in terms of living under the same roof. You might discuss finances, access to a vehicle, expectations for participating in family activities, etc. -- and you will want to learn about the expectations that your graduate has. **Don't Make the Mistake:** Many families make the mistake of letting situations evolve rather than anticipating possible areas of conflict and discussing them. It is a lot easier for family members to express concerns, make suggestions, and reach shared agreements before conflict occurs. Plan to help your graduate navigate being part of the family while also acknowledging that he or she is an adult member of the household.

From College to Career

If your graduate is transitioning from college to a job, then moving into that routine will likely be a priority for him or her, but if gaining employment has been difficult, he or she will likely feel a sense of frustration and disappointment. You can help by acknowledging the positive steps you see your graduate take in the job process. Families often make the mistake of taking on the career advisor role, which usually backfires. Encourage your graduate to utilize community resources, to access alumni networking, and to continue a connection with the campus career office, enabling you to be supportive without taking on a role in which you probably have little expertise.

Mostly, find ways to enjoy connecting with each other.

- Create time together that isn't focused on weighty conversations about financial independence and the job search.
- Celebrate even the little successes.
- Make time to periodically engage in activities in which you have a shared interest or consider trying something entirely new.

At the end of the day recognize that your relationship with your son or daughter is evolving and that stress and disagreements are inevitable, but neither need define your relationship.