**Changes in Relationship**

There are several things to consider that will prepare you both for the upcoming changes in your relationship.

* **Offer guidance instead of directives.** Though your role changes, you will still need to parent – just in a different way. Provide assistance or reassurance as your student pursues new interests and passions.
* **Discuss your expectations**. Even if you have already laid a foundation of values throughout your student’s life, re-discuss these expectations now, especially about sex, drugs, and alcohol. Other things to consider are academic goals and financial accountability.
* With regard to the **academic** side of things, reassure them that they can do it, or they wouldn’t have gotten in to university in the first place. But many students struggle because they aren’t well organised. One of the biggest differences between secondary school and university is that they will have to work out their own routines and manage their own time schedules. Good time management skills are a great stress-preventer!
* [#Littlethings](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/Get-involved/LittleThings-campaign/) Every single one of us will experience tough times in our lives. YourMentalHealth.ie is a place to learn about mental health, and how to mind yourself and support the people you love. You can find mental health and related support services near you, and learn about the #littlethings that can make a big difference to how we all feel.
* **Stress** is one of the main factors affecting academic performance. Some stress can be prevented, but not all stress is avoidable, so it’s important to help students learn to cope with it effectively. Strategies include regular exercise, healthy nutrition (particularly cutting back on caffeine and sugar), meditation and fun social activities.
* **Stay connected**. Whether it’s by E-mail, text or a phone call, be supportive when you communicate, and let your student know that you will always be available. Work out an agreement as to how often you expect them to contact you, and in what circumstances and how often you will contact them.
* **When your student comes home**, over time they will become more mature, which means you may need to renegotiate house rules and expectations. Be flexible and find a compromise where you will both be happy.
* **Ask your student** **how things are going**, spend time listening, offer support and show you care.
* **Allow for mistakes.** It may be instinctual to rush to your student’s aid, but it is important to realise that mistakes will be made and that it is part of the growing process. Instead, show your love and support through trying times, and encourage them to seek appropriate help from the university supports and services.
* **Emotional wellbeing** –It is normal for students to feel a bit overwhelmed by the demands of college life, or feel homesick or lonely at first; however go with your instinct. Be aware of any unusual behaviour from your student and recommend the Student Health Unit or Student Counselling on campus if the feelings persist or worsen. (Note: These services are completely confidential for the student, and parents will not be informed of any contact unless there is a genuine risk of serious harm.)

**Next steps**

Having patience, being flexible, and keeping the lines of communication open can help create and maintain a healthy relationship.

* Be patient with your student and allow for space and privacy
* Have trust in your student
* Accept who your student is becoming without judgment or criticism
* Provide assistance and reassurance when needed
* Readjust expectations when your child is home from college
* Show your love and support