

Summer: Stress or Sizzle?

The return home for college students and their parents can be a time of enjoyment and reconnection. It can also be very stressful for everyone involved; the parent, the student and siblings remaining at home. Your student has become used to new freedoms and new adult responsibilities over the last several months. Returning home can be a break from the pressures that these freedoms and responsibilities bring, it can also be the source of power struggles between students and their parents. It is your home and you will want and need to continue to have boundaries for everyone who lives there. Then again, realize that your student has experienced independence and accountability for their decisions over the past several months.

As much as possible, seek to have a conversation where everyone can communicate regarding expectations and responsibilities. Schedule a time early in the summer (before if possible) to discuss some of the following topics:

- **Curfew:** Do they need one or not? If so, what is it?
- **Consequences:** What if your student goes against your wishes or established boundaries? What will happen? They are young adults, but it is still important to be clear about what is “out of bounds.”
- **Household Duties** (for both the student and the parent): Will your student be expected to help around the house? Parents, your student are not a guest in your home. They can still be asked to do their share. Also, what are you willing to do for them? Laundry, mending, car maintenance?
- **Privacy:** Letting go and letting your student soar is difficult. Parents *and* students are used to having more privacy when the student is at school. It everyone communicates their needs and then agrees to stick to what is decided it will go better.
- **Overnight guests:** What are the rules overnights within romantic relationships? Are the rules different for friends? What are the rules? What are the sleeping arrangements?
- **Expenses:** What are your student’s financial responsibilities over the summer? If they are unable to find a job what are the expectations? Are their earnings solely theirs? Talk about how finances and the current economic situation affects your family and your student’s financial situation for the coming academic year.
- **Family obligations:** is your student expected to attend all family functions? What about the family vacation? How does that impact work? What about religious services? Volunteering?
- **Explore changing views:** Students are exposed to a wide variety of ideas, beliefs and world views. Some of these may be very different from yours and how you raised your family. Understand that part of becoming an adult is learning how to weigh out all that you are aware of and form your own ideas and beliefs. Though this is difficult as a parent, it is also difficult for your student to “cross” you.

Above all, enjoy each other. Strive for communication. If the summer ends up stressful, find peace in the knowledge that this is typical development. Communication begins to build the foundation of a strong adult relationship that will remain throughout their lives.