

## All grown up and gone for good? Advice on empty-nest syndrome

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(Medical Xpress)—Your high school graduate is off to college to embark on a newly independent life. But they're not the only one making a transition: parents too face emotional and lifestyle adjustments. With advice on empty-nest syndrome and the college transition, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital physicians offer expert tips for parents and children on topics including redecorating your child's room, credit cards, keeping in touch and more.

"For your college-bound child, the goal is transitioning them into greater independence and responsibility. If you're a so-called 'helicopter parent' who micromanages your child's life, now's the time to land," says Dr. Karen Soren, director of adolescent health services at NewYork-Presbyterian/Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and associate clinical professor of pediatrics and public health at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. "Even before they go away, give your child more freedom, while your direct oversight is still possible."

"It's normal to experience some sense of sadness or loss when your child goes away for college. It's also common for children to feel homesick even though they may have been excited to go away to college," says Dr. John Walkup, director of child and adolescent psychiatry at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. "Parents should spend more time with each other and with friends, and when they get that homesick call from their child, parents should encourage them to get involved in campus activities. Your child should know that you will always be there to listen, but that it is important to make new friends and

acclimate to this new environment."

Drs. Walkup and Soren offer more tips on making the college transition easier:

**Keep in touch, but don't overdo it.** When your child goes away to school, it may be an opportunity to develop a different kind of relationship. Recognize that their new independence is an important step.

**The Sunday night phone call is no longer the norm.** Intermittent cell phone calls, text messages and e-mails are now common.

**Children appreciate a space of their own when they come home to visit.** Try to keep your child's room intact for awhile. Parents often redecorate and reclaim some space, but ask your child first. See if you can give them another space to call their own.

**Educate yourself on the school's policies toward drinking and other rules.** Talk to your [child](#) about their responsibilities and their safety. Problems like binge drinking start as early as the first weeks of school.

**Talk to your child about money.** Come to an understanding about who is paying for tuition, books, clothing, travel, phone, etc. Discuss whether they will take a part-time job or use a credit card (credit card companies aggressively market to [college](#) students).

**Read everything that the school sends you.** Stay informed. And, if there's a [parents'](#) visiting day, go.

**If parent or child has prolonged difficulty adjusting, they should seek professional evaluation.**

Provided by New York- Presbyterian Hospital

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