

Your “New and Improved” College Freshman Returns Home

Well, mom and dad...it's about that time. It's time for your favorite freshman to return home after the completion of his/her first year as a college student. I imagine that this concept is pretty appealing to most parents. Even with occasional weekly visits here and there, it's just not the same as having your son/daughter around for an extended period of time. While this is certainly a time that most parents look forward to, don't be disappointed if it's not everything you hoped it would be. The college experience has changed your child. Whether the changes are small or large, be prepared to witness some changes when your freshman returns home. Our advice to parents is really quite simple. When your freshman returns home, keep an open mind and challenge him/her as needed.

Things to anticipate:

- **Be prepared to share your home with a more independent, free-thinking individual.** While this newfound independence may challenge you over the break, try not to forget how hard you worked as a parent to help him/her develop this independence.
- **Your student may not look exactly the same.** As frightening as it may be, the college years are for many a time of experimentation. This could include changes in dress, getting a tattoo, or dying their hair the color of your living room. Remember that this is the same student you sent to college, they just might come home in a slightly different package.
- **Your student may not need your help as much as they used to.** Your child has lived away from you and has grown through the somewhat stressful process of managing day to day activities. Understand that this is a part of growing up and becoming independent. The good news is that after they are done establishing their independence, they will most likely need your opinion again. The bad news is that this will take time, and in the meantime, try to understand the process that is taking place.
- **Try to adjust the rules and regulations for living in your house that existed before your child left for college.** Your child has most likely managed their own time, and come and gone per their own schedule. Acknowledge this, and have discussions with your child when they return home to re-negotiate expectations for living and house rules.
- **You may need to take on the role of listener, versus advice and opinion giver.** Expect that your student may vent to you about any problems they may be having on campus. Support your child through opinion and advice, unless they ask you for it.
- **Your child may think that they know everything about everything.** In reality they have learned a lot through their college experience, which is why you are investing in their education. *Remember this!*

We all want our children to need us, but we also want them to grow up to be strong, intelligent, assertive, independent adults. No, your freshman certainly doesn't know all there is to know. And, yes, chances are good that they will still make some decisions that you just don't quite understand. It won't happen all at once, but your child is slowly, but surely, becoming an independent adult. Be prepared, be patient and enjoy this time with your child. Before you know it he will be back at school and you'll be missing him...again.