

Five Things Students Want Parents to Remember

As a university counselor, I have had the opportunity to listen to hundreds of students share their concerns. Over the years, I have compiled 5 themes that are very common among students in regards to their relationship with their parents during this developmental phase of their lives. As a result, I believe it is important to share with parents, the various points their students would like them to know.

“ I can solve it on my own”

Problem solving skills and the ability to think through the consequences of our decisions are requirements for adulthood. It is natural for parents to want to rush in and save their children from all their dilemmas. However, when you solve their problems for them, it sends them an underlying message that they are not competent enough to figure it out for themselves and it deprives them of the opportunity to critically think and problem solve on their own. Over the next 4 to 6 years, the development of problem-solving skills is crucial to being successful in all areas of their lives. During their college career, your son or daughter will most likely call you to report they just failed their first calculus or chemistry exam of the semester. After learning this information, it is often a parent's first response, to pick up the phone and call the instructor to find out how they can still pass the class. However, it is important to let them solve their problems. Whether it's related to relationships, roommates, managing money, or academics, guide them through the process versus solving it for them. Ask questions such as “ What do you think you should do? What would happen if you do that? How else could that be handled?” This way, they are doing the brain storming and you are teaching them how to problem solve on their own for the future.

“ I want to decide for myself”

Now that they are overcoming challenges on their own, they are going to be excited about this new-found independence and will not be able to contain themselves from sharing with you, all of the outcomes of their

opportunity to let you know. In addition, if they want your advice but don't use it, it is okay. That goes back to them making their own decisions. But hearing your values and suggestions will stick with them even if they don't always agree with you. Finally, if they just wanted to vent, then you have given them a safe place to do that. Unless it involves their safety, just listen and don't use it against them later to prove a point. Be their sounding board. They will respect your support and will be calling you within 24 hours to tell you about the next overwhelming and frustrating experience.

" This is what I enjoy and it is important to me"