



Just for Parents

Supporting your student with the transition to college

The transition to college is an exciting time for both students and parents. It can also be an anxious time. It is hard not to worry when your student is in charge of their own life for the first time. Here are some suggestions on how to support your college student during this first year at UC Berkeley:

- **Stay in touch** — be available to talk and listen, set up a regular time to talk.
- **Be aware of the stresses your student faces** — this is a time when students often struggle to develop a sense of identity, independence, manage emotions, make new friends and negotiate the new freedom to make decisions.
- **Be realistic** — It often takes students several semesters before they can learn what is expected and master their coursework. Often it takes several years to identify a major or career path.
- **Encourage your student to problem-solve** and to trust their own abilities rather than trying to solve the problem yourself.
- **Allow space** — let your student set the agenda of conversations and have a voice in the frequency of contact. Don't insist on daily contact.
- **Be prepared for change** — Your student will be different than when they lived at home.
- **Don't panic** — When your student calls home unexpectedly in tears, give it a day and see if it passes.

Know when to be concerned.

Warning signs and symptoms that your college student is in significant distress:

- Crisis persisting after 6–8 weeks
- Student overwhelmed: everything is a problem, tearful calls outnumber the others
- Impaired sleeping: too much or insomnia
- Eating problems
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Hopelessness about future
- Worthlessness - extremely low self-esteem, self-criticism
- Irritability, frequent arguments, physical acting out
- Excessive fatigue or lethargic mood
- Extreme increases in energy, rapid speech
- Difficulties with concentration, memory, decision-making
- Recurrent thoughts of death, thoughts of suicide, giving away possessions, suggestions that they won't be around in the future

What parents can do:

- Express your concerns directly.
- Suggest and encourage counseling.
- Visit our website to learn more about with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):
uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling. CAPS offers short-term counseling for academic, career, and personal issues. Students can call to make an appointment or stop by the Tang Center on the 3rd floor.
- Consult with CAPS counselors. If you are unsure whether your student needs help, call (510) 642-9494 Monday-Friday 10am-5pm.
- Whenever possible, allow your student to take the next step.

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