

# HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

COUNSELING AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

215-898-7021

(including nights/weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)

3624 MARKET STREET, FIRST FLOOR WEST  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

MON | FRI 9 am - 5 pm  
TUES | WED | THURS 9 am - 7 pm  
SAT 10 am - 3 pm

[www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps)



## UNDERSTANDING THE *transition* TO COLLEGE

*The transition to college* is a time of excitement for students. Your child is experiencing newfound autonomy. College offers intellectual stimulation, a wealth of choices, and countless ways to explore new relationships and experiences. Most families adjust fairly well, but for some families, this transition also ushers in feelings of ambivalence or concern.

This brochure offers general and specific suggestions to help your child succeed in a college setting. Parents seeking assistance in supporting their children may want to consult with the staff at Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). CAPS offers free and confidential professional counseling to all students at the University of Pennsylvania.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

**STAY IN TOUCH:** Your child may be testing new independence, but he/she needs to know that you are available to talk about routine events and difficult issues.

**DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS & ALLOW SPACE:** Talk about and establish expectations. Determine jointly when and how best to stay in touch (balancing email, texting, calls, letters) and address ongoing issues such as money or academics. A family communications plan can help you maintain meaningful interaction during a challenging time.

**BE REALISTIC:** College life is hectic and students often take on many academic and social obligations. Balance is essential. Remind your child to make time to sleep, relax, eat well, and exercise.

**PICK YOUR BATTLES:** Conflicts are a part of the parent-child relationship. Prioritize what is really important and allow yourself to let go of some issues. Promote healthy independence, decision-making, coping, and resilience.

**ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO MAKE USE OF PENN'S RESOURCES:** The University of Pennsylvania has a wide variety of academic and wellness support systems available for all students to utilize. Remind your child that seeking help is a sign of strength.

## How to talk TO YOUR CHILD IF YOU THINK THERE IS A PROBLEM

### BE SPECIFIC

Tell your child why you are concerned.

### LISTEN ATTENTIVELY

Focus on your child and validate their feelings.

### CLARIFY STATEMENTS

Establish a mutual understanding of the situation. When your child feels understood, they may be more receptive to advice and ideas.

### AVOID CRITIQUING

Don't judge, even if your child asks your opinion. Negativity can push your child away and close off communication.

### RESPECT AND ACKNOWLEDGE

Validate your child's concerns. Don't minimize the problem or tell them not to worry.

### DEVELOP OPTIONS TOGETHER

Brainstorming solutions can build trust between you and your child and may help solve the problem.

## IF YOU KNOW *your child* NEEDS HELP

PARENTS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS MAY SENSE THAT SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY AMISS OR ENCOUNTER SITUATIONS WHERE OUTSIDE HELP IS ESSENTIAL. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Disengaging from family and activities
- Spending more money without explanation
- Appearing/reporting feeling depressed, agitated, anxious
- Trouble coping with academic challenge or failure

PENN PROFESSIONALS ARE HERE TO HELP YOUR FAMILY IN ANY OF THESE SITUATIONS. PLEASE ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO SEEK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

- College House Dean, RA, or GA
- CAPS or Student Health Service clinician
- Academic Advisor/cultural resource center staff
- University Chaplain or other religious figure

**CAPS** welcomes conversations with parents. However, due to state and federal law regarding confidentiality, as well as professional ethics, clinicians are unable to talk specifically about your child unless your child provides consent by completing a CAPS Release of Information Form.

If your child has a history of mental health treatment, is taking medication prescribed by a psychiatrist, or if you think that he/she may benefit from long-term or specialized support during college, CAPS clinicians can help your child establish a relationship with a community provider.

## ..... Penn ..... RESOURCES

**CAPS**  
(including nights/weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)  
215-898-7021

**OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN**  
215-898-8456

**HELP LINE**  
215-898-HELP (4357)

**RAP LINE**  
(Reach A Peer, 9PM - 1AM)  
215-573-2RAP (2727)

**SPECIAL SERVICES**  
215-898-6600

**STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE**  
215-746-3535

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR  
UNIVERSITY LIFE/  
STUDENT INTERVENTION SERVICES**  
215-898-6081

**WEINGARTEN LEARNING  
RESOURCES CENTER**  
215-573-9235

July 2017

