

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

As a parent, you want to invest your time in things that matter. Like having the right conversation with your child at the right time, with the right things to say at your fingertips. These conversation guides will help you navigate the critical issues you face at each phase, as you imagine the end for your child. They are based on research from **The Phase Project**, a collaborative, ongoing effort assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.



After High School

TRANSITION

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for intentional conversations with kids

Is there a more common feeling in parenting than that of, “I have no idea what I’m doing, but I have to look like I’ve got it together”? For whatever reason, our kids seem to have the idea that we were born parents and should be professionals at parenting. But there’s no other time when our uncertainty in how we’re doing is more obvious than when it comes to handling transitions—especially the big ones. As our “kids” prepare to fly the coop, graduate high school, and begin college, we’re going to be floundering our way forward as much as they are. Here are some tips on how to at least sound like you know what you’re doing as your kids move into adulthood. Remember, your role in this phase is to:

MOBILIZE their potential

WHAT TO SAY:

"All new beginnings can be scary. That doesn't change when you're an adult. It's okay to feel overwhelmed at this new stage. There are times when I feel overwhelmed too."

"Take advantage of the social opportunities college has to offer. Try out a bunch of stuff until you find your niche. There will be a trial and error period."

"It's okay if your experience isn't as perfect as you expect it to be right away. Fitting into a new world takes some time."

"You don't have to figure out your whole life right now."

"High school isn't the end. It's the end of a season, but it's not the end of the world. I can't wait to hear about your new experiences in this new season!"

"Work at finding a balance. Take classes seriously, but have a social life too."

"You will probably feel overwhelmed and homesick at some point. That's normal, and it won't last forever!"

Consider This:

Write a letter. Sometimes putting things in writing is easier than saying them face to face. Plus, when it's on paper it can be pulled out and read over and over again whenever your kids want—and mail is precious to a college student. So, take the time to put down your thoughts. What do you wish for them? What are you most excited about for them? What do you see in them that shows you they're ready and able to take on the challenge before them? Remember to make this less about you and more about them. Make this about what you see in them that will set them up for the win.

Call them. Or text them. Regularly. Don't be a helicopter parent, but be connected. You put in the work and don't take it personally if the effort isn't reciprocated.

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"I don't know what I am going to do without you!"

No excessive phone calls or excessive emotion. *(Allow them to set the tone.)*

"I think it would be better if you did it this way." *(Part of them branching out is learning by trial and error. If you feel the need to correct, try asking in a question, "Have you thought about doing it this way?")*

"Your brother (or sister) was fine. You will be too." *(Every child is different and may need varying levels of attention and guidance beginning the college transition. Let your child's personality be your guide for what they'll need from you.)*

"I'll fix it for you, don't worry!" *(Don't fix their problems. Which includes calling their professors, calling to wake them up, or jumping into a situation that may not be ideal, but doesn't need your involvement.)*

"You never call me or text me! Why don't you need me anymore?"
No projecting guilt on their lack of calling or conversation when they do call from college.

After any misstep: "I told you so," "You should have listened to me,"
"I know what I'm talking about."

"We all went to Applebee's tonight and missed you!" or "Wish you were home and I could make you your favorite cookies tonight!" *(Avoid text guilt. They need to be fully present where they are and not feeling like you're on the verge of an emotional breakdown in their absence.)*

JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. Remember that in this phase, your almost-adult child thinks like a philosopher, is motivated by freedom, and is wondering "how will I do?". Whether they're transitioning to college or a work environment, they still need your support and encouragement. Continue to ask questions that help them create vision and focus on their options.