Handling the Transition as a Parent

- Allow yourself to feel whatever emotions arise—there is little benefit in pretending that you don't feel sad, guilty, relieved, apprehensive, or whatever feelings you do have, while your child is getting ready to go to College. You probably aren't fooling anyone by trying to hide your reactions; a healthier approach is to talk about your feelings with family, friends, clergy, or whoever is a source of support for you.

- Make overall wellness a goal for yourself—especially during stressful times, it helps to get enough sleep, eat healthful meals regularly, and get adequate exercise. Spending some recharging time doing the special things that you enjoy is another step toward wellness. If you are feeling good, you are more likely to have the energy to help your child and be a good role model.

- Remember that, for your child, coming to college is a tremendously important developmental step toward full adulthood—it represents the culmination of the teachings and learnings of 18 years or so, much of it geared toward helping your child assume a productive place in the world. This is the time when your hard work will show itself in the form of a framework that your freshman will use in making independent choices. Many parents find that it helps to focus on the fact that providing your child with this opportunity is a priceless gift. Be proud of yourself!

- Find a new creative outlet for yourself—this is especially important for parents whose last or only child has moved away to college. Taking on a new challenge is an excellent way to manage and channel energy and feelings. Have you ever wanted to write a book? Learn to fly-fish? Make a quilt? Volunteer in your community? Assume a new project or responsibility at work? Travel? Get your own bicycle and ride all over town? Make a list of all the things you intended to do while your child was growing up, but never had the time to do. Now is your chance!