



An affiliate of the  
American Psychological  
Association

# PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

416 Forster Street • Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102-1748 • Telephone 717-232-3817 • Fax 717-232-7294  
<http://www.papsy.org>

## What Do I Need To Know About My Child Going Off To College?

*By Eric H. Affsprung, Ph.D.*

A child's departure for college ushers in a time of both excitement and stressful readjustment for parents who may find themselves feeling lonely, unsure of their own identity, all too aware that they are aging, financially burdened, and worried about their child's ability to succeed academically. In addition, parents may experience stress in their relationship with one another as roles change and old conflicts re-emerge.

It can be difficult for parents to watch their child struggling to separate from home and family, establish a new adult identity with its sometimes very different values, choose a career path and explore new relationships. Parents may find it confusing when a child insists on independence full of wrong turns and false starts, only to return home repeatedly for support, guidance and reassurance. A child's move to college may also resurrect painful memories of a parent's own youthful mistakes.

Parents will find it helpful and reassuring to make themselves aware of the academic, occupational, financial, social and emotional resources available to students on campus, and encourage their children to make use of them. For example, may universities have counseling centers where mental health professionals can assist students (and consult with parents) during this time of transition? Closer to home, parents may find it helpful to talk openly with one another and with their children about their concerns, seek out other parents who also have children in college, or talk with a psychologist or other mental health professional who can provide support and guidance.

***Talk to someone who can help.*** If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator.