

# Just for Parents

## How to support your son/daughter 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 son or daughter is in charge of his/her own life for the first time. Here are some suggestions on how to support your college student during this first year at Cal:

- **Stay in touch** – be available to talk and listen, set up a regular time to talk.
- **Be aware of the stresses your son/daughter 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 son/daughter to problem-solve** and to trust his/her own abilities rather than trying to solve the problem yourself.
- **Allow space** – let your son/daughter 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 son/daughter will be different than when he/she lived at home.
- **Don't panic** – When your son/daughter calls home unexpectedly in tears, give it a day and see if it passes.

### Know when to be concerned

Here are the warning signs/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 web site to become acquainted with Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS):  
[uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling/cps.shtml](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling/cps.shtml). CPS offers crisis intervention, brief counseling for personal family, career and academic concerns. Students can call to make an appointment Monday-Friday 8am- 5PM PST.
- Consult with CPS counselors. If you are unsure whether your son/daughter needs help, call 510/642-9494 between the hours of 8AM and 5PM PST.
- Whenever possible, allow your student to take the next step.