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### How to Be a Helpful Helicopter Parent

St. Norbert College

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SNC Day is a great time for parents to share on-campus experiences with their SNC student.

## How to Be a Helpful Helicopter Parent

It's hard to be a college parent. You want to be there for your student, yet you also want this adventure to be truly theirs, with all of its successes, failures and valuable life lessons.

While there's nothing wrong with wanting to help your student through their college career, experts say that parents who do too much can end up with children who are depressed, have low self-esteem, and who lack essential decision-making and problem-solving skills.

Yet it's also harmful to be an aloof or disengaged parent. The trick is to find that balance where you're aware of what's going on in your student's life and involved when necessary, but not smothering them with attention. After all, becoming an adult requires taking on more and more responsibilities.

Here are some ways you can help your student without going overboard.

### Be supportive, but don't fight their battles

If your student is having problems with their roommate, professor or teammate, don't grab the phone and call the college to intervene. Let them vent to you about it first, then help brainstorm ways to tackle the issue. Maybe that will mean talking directly with the person, or having your student – not you – contact an RA, advisor or coach to assist.

"It sometimes is helpful to remind them of other times they've navigated hard things," says Corday Goddard, assistant vice president for student affairs. "They really can do this!"

It can also help to coach them on how to calm their emotions when they're upset. In addition to [counseling services](#), both in person and via teletherapy, the college has many other offerings to help alleviate stress and anxiety, including yoga, biofeedback, support groups and a new sensory room.

### Let them set the communication schedule

It may be tempting to check in with your student every day, especially if you're close. And with today's technology, it's very easy to do. But too-frequent contacts, even as innocuous as a text, can hamper the development of their self-reliance, confidence and independence.

So instead of requiring your student to call or text a certain number of times in a day, week or month, let them set the communication schedule, which will give them space to grow. If they are the ones in constant contact, gently encourage them to try cutting back.

"That being said, remember that every family will do this differently," Goddard says. "So find a schedule that works for everyone."

One final caveat: If your student's communication frequency suddenly changes drastically, check in to make sure all is well.



### Discussing Healthy Relationships

Each year, SNC releases a [security and fire safety report](#) in compliance with the [Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act](#), or Clery Act. These numbers reflect reported instances of crime on campus, including acts of gender-based violence.

Use this information to speak with your student about their health, safety and well-being, and especially about what constitutes a healthy relationship. SNC has a wonderful network of support for students who have experienced any gender-based violence. Check out [this site](#) for info on how the college responds to and supports survivors of gender-based violence.

### Also in This Issue

This article first appeared in the November 2022 issue of Parents of St. Norbert College. Other features in this edition included:

[Six Common Questions About College Finances](#)

[Shelly Mumma Wants to Talk – With You!](#)

[How to Be a Helpful Helicopter Parent](#)

[My SNC Student Is a Student-Athlete](#)

[Global Seminars Are Back](#)  
[It's Quiz Time!](#)



Consider separating shared accounts

When your student was younger, shared accounts were often important for reasons of safety and convenience. But do you really need to know what they’re buying on Amazon? And if your student blows through their Custom Cash, it may be more helpful for them to figure out that they need to cut down on the specialty lattes, rather than you telling them to do so.

Goddard agrees. “There may be accounts that should be shared, like tuition, room and board, but it really may be time for them to get their own Netflix account.”

Let them take charge of travel

Whether we’re talking Study Abroad or trips back home, your student is capable of make travel and transportation arrangements. There’s nothing wrong with answering questions about obtaining a passport, setting up frequent flier accounts or obtaining TSA Pre-Check, but your student should do the work. We all learn by doing.

Let them fail

This one is hard. No one wants to see their student fail at anything, whether it’s one test, a sports or musical tryout, or with friendships. But failing a class or not making the team won’t ruin their college career, let alone their life. In fact, failure is part of life. And the more we experience and cope with that, the less it devastates us.

“If there is no failure at all,” says Goddard, “then we want them to be trying harder and having more of an adventure.”

Talk, talk, talk

While you shouldn’t necessarily contact your student every day, you do want them to know that they can talk to you about anything without fear of a backlash. If they know that you’re OK when they’re being honest with you, they will be more likely to share things, whether that’s a poor grade they received or a request that you call less frequently. When they do share, remember to thank them for their honesty.

Goddard adds that when your student opens up to you, make sure you know what they want from you. “Are they asking for your advice? Asking for your opinion? Asking you to intervene for them? Be a person they can share anything with, and help them determine what next steps they want to take to address whatever they’ve shared.”

Nov. 17, 2022

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