

PARENTS' PAGE

Welcome Parents!

Your son or daughter's college experience will likely produce large adjustments for you as parents and other members of your family as well. It is our hope that some of the following information will help you manage this time of change and challenge, and also help you support your student here at Merrimack College.

What your son or daughter may experience:

College will likely be a time of exploration and change for them. They may develop new aspects to their identity; they are likely to seek increased autonomy, develop new friendships and explore alternate values. They may reevaluate career goals, and change their majors. Some of this exploration may challenge you and values that you hold dear. Parents want to do what's best for their children, and since living out college life is an ongoing evolution, parents need to be flexible and make adjustments as the students do. Each one of these young people will go through this process in their own unique way, just as every parent will have different expectations of, and reactions to, their son or daughter's college experience.

What parents may experience:

Happiness, pride, anxiety, sadness, and a sense of loss may all be a part of your response to this time of change. As children grow into young adults you may worry about their safety, ability to care for themselves, and capacity to make healthy choices. At times you may also feel relief that now your young adult children are learning to "fly on their own." With such large transitions as college there are always many things changing for both parents and students.

How you can support your student:

- **Balance** maintaining a sense of connectedness to him or her along with respect for their growing independence. Try to let them take the lead. Determine *with them* how much contact with them is appropriate. (The cell phone has been described as the "world's longest umbilical cord" and may be more of a problem than an asset in setting good boundaries.)
- Be **realistic** and **specific** about financial issues including what you will pay for and what they will be responsible for. Also be realistic about their academic performance. The challenges here are much different than they were offered in high school.

How can the Hamel Health Counseling Services help parents?

We are available for consultation with parents by phone or by appointment here in our offices. If you have concerns about your son or daughter please feel free to contact us. We may be able to provide support for you, your student, or referral information to offices that may be more appropriate for a given problem.

What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality is absolutely necessary for a trusting and effective counseling relationship. Ethical and legal considerations prohibit us from sharing any information about a student's counseling contacts without their consent. We can always **listen** to information that may help us help your son or daughter.