

Hold off on saying, "These are the best years of your life!"

While in retrospect, the good aspects of college life may stand out to you, it can be very stressful for first year students. There is a lot to juggle. Plus, indecision or poor decisions, insecurity, disappointment, and mistakes can be part of the adjustment period. While your Yellow Jacket's college experience will develop into discovery, inspiration, good times, and friendships, you may want to wait another year or so to actually use this phrase.

Parents who accept the transitional highs and lows of their students experience are providing the kind of support that is often most needed. Not all students start out with good grades, know what they want to major in, and always have fun on weekends. Most students, however, figure these issues out over time.

Trust Them

Finding oneself is a difficult enough process without feeling that the people whose opinions you respect most are second-guessing your own second-guessing. One of the most important things you can say to your new Yellow Jacket is something like this: *"I love you and want you to find what makes you happiest; I trust you to figure this out so you can become the person you're meant to be."* If you truly believe this, your new Yellow Jacket will have the best support of all. Say it soon – it can make a difference.

Know the right people to call

Think of the **Counseling Center** as your on-site resource when you receive that distressing phone call at 3 a.m. from your new Yellow Jacket, or when he or she doesn't know what to major in or wants to find an internship. Family members have driven miles to rescue their college student only to find the crisis over upon their arrival to Ashland. So relax and know there are many resources here on campus.

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**Randolph-Macon
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Ashland, Virginia

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College**

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**PARENTING
A
YELLOW
JACKET**

Counseling Services

**Professional, Confidential
Counseling Services**

**Pannill House
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www.rmc.edu/counseling/

WELCOME TO R-MC

The staff of Counseling Services is dedicated to making your loved-one's transition to college life as rewarding as possible.

Making the adjustment to adulthood will be experienced not only by the student, but also by you. Parents often ask, "How much support should I give?" or "When should I let go?" and "What can I expect this year?" In this brochure, we provide suggestions you may wish to consider during your son or daughter's first year at R-MC.

Parents as Partners

Approaching the next phase of this relationship with your son or daughter as a *partnership* may help with the transition from home to college. This will require *loosening ties but staying connected*.

About homesickness

Students experience and express homesickness in different ways. For those with a mild case, all that's needed is someone to listen and reassure them they won't always feel this way. When homesickness lasts too long, encourage them to seek counseling at our Center. When nothing helps, a transfer closer to home is sometimes the best solution. On the flip side, don't be disturbed if your new college student doesn't mention how much he or she misses you. The first months of college are filled with new activities and challenges. Even if you do not hear the words, *know that you are definitely missed!*

Listen

First year students usually resent interference with their newly independent lifestyles, but most still desire the security of knowing that parents are interested in them—and will listen.

College students still value the opportunity to talk with parents. So be sure to *LISTEN* as much as possible. Honest, sincere questions are always welcome. But constant checking or interrogations will likely affect this new partnership in negative ways.

Write (even if they don't reply)

Although new students are typically eager to experience all the away-from-home independence they can fit in those first weeks, most still want family ties and the security those ties bring. Students can get fairly discouraged when they don't get mail, email, or instant messages.

Remember, you may not get a reply to everything that you send (the "you write, they write" rule of correspondence doesn't seem to apply to college students). The handwritten letter or card is still valued. In the age of the Internet, you'd be surprised how often students comment on how much they like to get letters from loved-ones. Since email is a primary form of communication here on campus, please consider using your college student's R-MC email address when you correspond via internet. This may be an added incentive for them to check their R-MC account.

Transitions

Your new Yellow Jacket will change. It's natural and inevitable. This change can create new family dynamics, and sometimes, new conflicts. College can bring about social, personal, and career changes. But remember, maturation is not an instantaneous or overnight process. So be patient and remember that your son or daughter will *basically* be the same person you sent away to school. He or she has simply gained some additional experiences and education to integrate into their lives.



Don't worry about "crisis" calls

Some transitions can become too much for a new student to handle and the only place to turn is home. In these "crisis" times, your loved-one can unload troubles or tears and, after the release, return to routine – often leaving *you* to inherit the burden of worry! Be patient with these calls and letters. Know that you're providing a real service as an advice dispenser or just a sympathetic ear.

Do try to resist the temptation to rush in and "save the day." Learning personal responsibility is an important part of the college experience. There are many resources on campus to help students in a mini-crisis. Encourage them to seek out such support themselves from college staff and friends.

College drinking (aka "partying")

Research has shown that when parents firmly discourage underage drinking, especially binge drinking, first year college students are less likely to develop drinking problems. Become familiar with Virginia law and R-MC policies regarding alcohol and illegal drug use – and convey these to your son or daughter.

Visits

Visits by family (especially when accompanied by shopping sprees and/or dinners out) are a part of first year events that new students may be reluctant to admit liking – but appreciate greatly. Pretended disdain of those visits may just be another part of the 'new student' syndrome. Visits give both student and family member the opportunity to learn more about new things that both are experiencing.

However, spur-of-the-moment surprises are usually not appreciated (pre-empting a planned weekend of study or other activities can have disappointing results for all). It's usually best to call prior to your visit in order to ensure your new Yellow Jacket will be able to adjust his/her plans.