



## WHEN YOUR CHILD LEAVES FOR COLLEGE

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It's back to school time and somewhere out there in our readership is a parent or two or maybe hundreds of you whose oldest, youngest or only child is about to leave for college.

I remember well the time when my only child was getting ready to leave for her first year of college. In between shopping at Target for all those adorable dorm accessories and packing up clothes, I wondered what would happen to me when my husband and I suddenly became empty nesters. After all those years of swim meets and soccer matches, birthday parties and school outings, sleepovers and the constant stream of my daughter's friends in the house, what would life be like when she moved away?

All summer long, I referred to that day (in my mind) as the "day of dread." Even the orientation went poorly, so how were we ever going to leave her there? I just knew this whole going away to college was going to be a disaster.

But somewhere along the way, I gradually changed my thinking. As an adult who completed her education while working a full time job, I didn't have that experience of going away to college, living in a dorm and joining a club or sorority. I began to realize this would be a wonderful chapter in my daughter's life coupled with the once in a lifetime opportunities she would experience. I wanted that for her. And once I realized that, I started to embrace this bold new adventure we were all about to embark on.

And embrace we did! With my daughter's guidance, we discovered new restaurants, new towns, new adventures each time we visited her at college. We met her teachers, discovered breakfast

burritos at Rosalina's, had drinks at The Hut and found the best chicken nachos at Henry's. We grew to love her campus and staying at our favorite hotel across from it. We watched our daughter blossom and thrive, making new friends, getting a job in the Art Department, joining a sorority, and developing a strong connection with some of her professors, one of who eventually became a lifelong friend, mentor and travel partner. And when our daughter moved to Italy for her study abroad experience in her junior year, we happily hopped on a plane half way through her stay in Rome. We had the time of our lives being toured around ancient Rome with our Art History major who was not only fully in her element, but also a darn good tour guide.

Sure the sleepovers were over, but her friends still came back to visit when everyone was home from school. And, we started traveling more and doing things like going to happy hour or watching a movie on a week night, something we would never have done during the homework years. We traveled off season, no longer worried about the school year. And when our daughter moved to London a few years later for her graduate study, I didn't fret! Every morning over coffee at the kitchen table, the Skype app would start ringing on the laptop and up popped my daughter's beautiful face.

So you moms (and dads) out there that are dreading that day when your child is off to college, take heart. Just know that this is the next phase in family life, when your child gets to have the time of their life and you get to discover a whole new world yourself.