

A NOTE TO WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS :

This workshop can be adapted to meet your needs: Suggestions for alternative small group discussions (Part II) if workshop is offered while students are still in the midst of the college application process.

Ask parents and students to write answers to the following questions:

- 1 What is causing anxiety during this college admission process?
- 2 What do your parents/children do to add to your frustration and anxiety?
- 3 What do you wish your parents/son or daughter would understand and/or do differently?

This workshop has been developed and is presented regularly on high-school and college campuses around the country by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger, co-authors of *Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years, Fifth Edition*.

To contact the authors:

Karen Levin Coburn, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Students, Washington University in St. Louis. Telephone 314-935-5040 or e-mail coburn@dosa.wustl.edu.

Madge Treeger at 314-361-4227 extension 7 or e-mail mltree@aol.com

The authors encourage high schools, colleges and universities to adapt this program to meet their own needs. There is no need to write for specific permission.

Letting Go is published by Harper paperbacks, a division of HarperCollins Publishers.

For information about quantity discounts available to schools and organizations, contact HarperCollins Publishers at 212-207-7528.

Brochures are available free of charge and can be distributed as part of a packet during parent or family programs. To request brochures, FAX 212-207-6955.

www.LettingGoBook.com

College Prep Workshop for Seniors and Their Parents

Projected time: 1-2 hours

Goals:

- 1 To reduce anxiety and increase communication between parents and students.
- 2 To foster the process of separation and "letting go."
- 3 To help students and parents develop more realistic expectations about college.

Room arrangements, materials and equipment needed:

- Comfortable room for large group presentation.
- Small rooms for discussion groups.
- Facilitators, counselors or teachers who will lead the small group discussions.
- 5x7 note cards to hand out to students and parents.
- Newsprint and markers or a chalkboard for group leaders to use in recording major points of small group discussions.
- Copies of the book *Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years*, Coburn and Treeger (Harper paperbacks) to be distributed to parents prior to workshop or sold at the workshop. Brochures and order forms for the book can be distributed at the workshop. (see note at end of outline.)

Format:

I. Introduction by leader (15 minutes)

- Warm up. Ask parents: "How many of you are sending your first child to college?"
- Ask students: "How many of you know where you are going next year?"
- Overview of workshop.
- Acknowledge that this is a time of anticipation, ambivalence and anxiety.
- Acknowledge that this has been a long year and that everyone is tired of talking about college.
- Discuss myths about college: (e.g. where you go to college determines the rest of your life, that most students know what they want to major in and know what they want to do for the rest of their lives, that there is one perfect college for each student).
- Acknowledge that parents and students often have basic and common goals—that they both want this transition to go smoothly, but they often behave in ways that prevent this.
- Explain that ambivalence is at the root of much of the tension.
- Discuss the importance of keeping a perspective—of asking the question, "Who is going to college; whose education is it?"
- Introduce *Letting Go* and explain that this workshop will touch on some of the topics covered in depth in this book.

Goals of *Letting Go*:

- Alleviate fear/legitimize feelings through information and shared experience of parents and students whose stories appear throughout the book.
- Describe how college is different today.
- Help distinguish normal developmental ups and downs from problems that require intervention.
- Provide a road map—predictable ups and downs of the academic year and rhythm of four years.

II. Preparation for small group discussion (10 minutes)

- Hand out 5x7 cards.
- Ask students and parents to write answers to the following questions:
 - 1 What excites you most about next year? What are you looking forward to?
 - 2 When you think about the coming year, what are you most anxious about? What do you fear?
 - 3 If you could tell your parent/child one thing, what would it be?

III. Small Group Discussions (20-30 minutes)

- After everyone has had the opportunity to fill out cards, facilitators divide the audience into groups (8-12 people would be ideal). Separate into parent groups and student groups.
- Facilitators lead group discussions, asking participants to share what they have written on their cards. Facilitators record basic points on newsprint or chalkboard to report back to large group.

IV. Debriefing in large group—move back to large room (15-20 minutes)

- Display newsprint summaries or simply report small group summaries.
- Leader debriefs the group—referring to summaries and asking for clarification from small group leaders. Comparison of students' views and parents' views, highlighting what they want each other to hear. Leader provides information and validation and notes common themes (e.g. independence, academic, social life, separation).

V. Introduction to College Experience (10-15 minutes)

- Mini lecture by leader with humorous illustrations from the book or leader's own experience with students.

Overview of the concepts of:

- The myth of "these are the best years of your life" (Ch. 4, "Great Expectations," *Letting Go*)
- Predictable stages of development (Ch. 2, "Some Things Never Change," *Letting Go*)
- The Four I's: Identity, Independence, Intimacy, and Intellectual Development
- How college is different today (e.g. diversity, more choices, demise of 'in loco parentis,' co-ed living, more services, financial concerns, technology, opportunities for leadership development, internships) (Ch. 3, "Some Things Do Change," *Letting Go*)

VI. Panel of local college freshmen or alumni of the high school (15-30 minutes)

- Describe their freshman year and answer questions (focus on such topics as orientation, academic life, college scene). (An alternative to this is a humorous skit—phone calls home over the course of the first semester including topics discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of *Letting Go*.)

VII. Wrap-up (5-10 minutes)

- Leaders and panel offer helpful hints to both parents and students.
- Advice to Students: (handout provided)—suggested topics
 - 1 Leave time during the summer to be with friends—to say goodbye.
 - 2 Fill out roommate and housing questionnaires carefully. Open and answer all mail from your college.
 - 3 Bring part of home with you—pictures of friends and family, yearbook, posters.
 - 4 Get to know physical environment of campus and campus services.
 - 5 Seek out faculty members and your advisor. Take advantage of office hours.
 - 6 Remember, being independent doesn't mean you have to do everything yourself. Seek help when you need it.
 - 7 Explore academic options. Most college freshmen do not know what they want to major in. Most will change ideas about majors; not to know is normal.
 - 8 Remember, new friends can't immediately fill the gap left by separation from long-standing friendships.
 - 9 Get involved in at least one campus activity first semester.
 - 10 Make time in your schedule for exercise, sleep, and "sit-down" meals.
- Advice to Parents: (handout provided)—suggested topic
 - 1 Be prepared for your child's—and your own—conflicting emotions as the day of departure approaches.
 - 2 Discuss academic expectations ahead of time. Encourage your son/daughter to set his/her own academic goals.
 - 3 Make a financial plan and openly discuss expectations with your child.
 - 4 Discuss expectations about communication/phone calls, e-mails, and letters.
 - 5 Discuss use of alcohol and other lifestyle choices your son/daughter will have to make, but don't give lectures.
 - 6 If you take your child to school, don't expect to spend a lot of time together. Orientation is designed to foster separation.
 - 7 Be a coach rather than a rescuer: encourage your son or daughter to use the resources at college. Learn what the academic and personal support services are. Keep the parents' handbook and materials from orientation in an accessible place.
 - 8 Don't make major changes at home without informing your son/daughter.
 - 9 Be an anchor. Listen with an open mind and be supportive.
 - 10 Keep in touch; write/send care packages.

VIII. Questions and Answers