

Conversation Starters for Parents



Where To Start

- Engage with your student before they head to college about how to prioritize their mental and physical health
- Make a transition plan that includes when and how to reach out and connect
- Encourage healthy habits including diet, sleep and movement.
- Talk with your student about how to advocate for their wellbeing.
- Be available for regular check ins
- Help your student learn how to navigate campus resources

How to Recognize Child in Distress

- **Academic:**
 - Declining grades
 - Missed classes or assignments
 - Academic misconduct
- **Physical:**
 - Change in appearance or personal hygiene
 - Unexplained physical injuries
 - Low energy or appetite
 - Difficulty or excessive sleeping
 - Signs of substance use
- **Emotional/Behavioral:**
 - Extreme emotions (crying, guilt, worthlessness)
 - Suicidal or homicidal thoughts
 - Social Withdrawal
 - Increased irritability, aggression or restlessness

Conversation Starters

- “Seems like you haven’t been yourself lately. What’s on your mind?”
- “Tell me about your day, what’s going well, what’s been challenging?”
- “I know you’re going through some stuff right now; I’m here for you.”
- “How are you taking care of yourself?”
- “What are the highs and lows in your world lately?”
- "I want you to know it's okay to talk about your feelings, even the tough ones. I'm here to listen."
- "I might not always understand exactly how you're feeling, but I want to try. Can you help me understand better?"
- “It’s OK to not feel OK. How can I help?”