

Norcross MD Advocacy

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The College Transition: What makes chapter 2 so difficult for new college students?

One Giant Leap for, well, you

College. It's that thing that your relatives ask about when they come for the holidays. For people in high school, either as a Junior or a Senior, it's also the next big step in your life. For people already in college, you have probably begun to see that those things you heard a hundred times from your relatives during the holidays were not just aimless anecdotes, but rather your life now. For many young people going into college, there are so many changes that they felt they were prepared for but quickly realized just how unprepared they seemed to feel, and about so many different things.



You may take it from me, or take it from data recorded in 2023 from colleges across the United States¹. While the concern of things like **class size**, **amount of reading required**, and the **amount of studying required** is typically what people focus on when it comes to going to college, and while those are very valid concerns when making this transition, it's often what we don't think about that end up making the biggest impact on us. For this month's newsletter, we will be discussing **the mental challenges that come with this giant leap**. But instead of one such for mankind, this giant leap is always one of the biggest in the individual lives of young adults moving through their life.

¹ CollegeData. (2023, October 25). *Transition to college: Here's what students have to say*. <https://www.collegedata.com/resources/transition-to-college/transition-to-college-survey-results>

Houston, we have lift-off

The immediate thought for most students entering college is **the possibility of moving away from home, from your parents, and the familiarity of your bedroom**, and rightfully so.

This is a huge step, primarily for that reason I just mentioned; **the familiarity**.

Leaving behind the comfort of what you've known for, in most cases, the majority of your life. You move to a new area, with new people, your favorite restaurants might not be there anymore, the movie theater you went to with your friends so many times is no longer just down the street. This feeling of familiarity you lose is different than that of the change you might have faced if you've ever moved with your family from one area to another for the obvious reason that your family did not go with you this time.



While everyone has different relations with their family, for most people there is always a sense of familiarity you have when around people you've been around for the crucial years of your childhood up to this point. Whether you spend every Saturday night with your family watching a family favorite movie or you don't even interact with your family very much at all, there has always been this constant in your mind that they've been there all those years. This is suddenly not the case. When your mom has told you to take the trash out or your dad has told you to do the dishes, you're put in a place where you have to remember to do this yourself or it will never get done. This push of responsibility becomes something that **many young adults may realize they are unfit to handle these responsibilities**.

This is one of the biggest points. This sudden change in our entire lifestyle is something that, according to Sarah Godfrey, writer for the Psychology Clinic known as Moving Mindsets² claims is what influences young adults the most. We are prone to resist change because, as Godfrey says, it often feels forced on us or unpredictable. This is so important to note, especially when you take into account that moving to college and away from home is a sign that you are growing up, a sign that you are becoming an adult, whether you are ready for that or not. **The passage of time will not wait for us, so it is important to**

² *The emotional impact of moving*. Moving Mindsets. (2022, February 22).

<https://www.movingmindsets.com.au/emotional-impact-moving-sarah-godfrey/#:~:text=Acknowledge%20that%20when%20you%20move,the%20move%20as%20a%20transition>.

learn how to mentally prepare ourselves when taking on these big changes. What scares many young adults at this time in their lives is this feeling that your childhood bliss has ended and you have been thrown into the world, regardless of how ready you feel. While there are parts of truth in this statement, there's more to it.

Godfrey goes on to make the claim that while our memories from our childhood, those comforting times you hold onto from high school or playing sports or something you did with your family or friends, while they might be in the past and you're onto new things, **this does not mean you leave those memories behind.** Her claim is that you bring these memories with you and they make you who you are as you move away and go onto new things. As long as they can persist in your mind and your character, this can mean they did not necessarily end. This idea can make the transition into college and away from home easier as you feel a sense of familiarity can come with you going into a now unfamiliar place.



You're not alone in your Spaceship

One of the bigger concerns young adults have when moving away from the family they have lived with their entire lives, or most of their lives, **is the transition to having roommates.** Assuming you don't know who your roommates are, which 53% of people do not³, this would mean you are now living with someone you had never previously met before, may not know much about early on, but now must share the responsibility of living together with this

person/these people. This is daunting for many people, especially those who had not lived away from home before, but while it is scary to think about living with seemingly strangers all of a sudden, there are ways that this can be an opportunity.

Living with roommates could open the opportunity **to become close friends with new people**, but this does not always have to be the case. While some people do become very good friends with their roommates, this is not always easy for people to do. However the problem is that many who do not become close friends with their roommates feel an obligation that they need to develop that connection and create that bond. **There doesn't need to be an obligation!** In my own experience and

³ *Roommate experiences explored.* Apartment Living Tips - Apartment Tips from ApartmentGuide.com. (2020, September 23).

<https://www.apartmentguide.com/blog/roommate-experiences-explored/#:~:text=Nearly%2047%25%20of%20people%20surveyed,not%20want%20to%20learn%20firsthand.>

in the experience of several of my close friends, you do not need to become best friends forever with your roommates. There are some things that do need to happen, things that some people at this age tend to forget or place below becoming great friends with them.

Building a comfortable and understanding sense of communication with your roommates is arguably the most important thing there is in having roommates. If you are to be living with people, especially when it is your first time living away from home, you want this space that you now live in to be **comfortable**, and this starts with **the atmosphere you create with your new roommates**. Unfortunately, while not all roommates you might get are going to be easy to live with, making yourself someone who is easy to live with is a great start in what you can control.

Being able to make yourself easy to work with and easy to live with is something that starts with understanding your part in a roommate agreement. This can come in several different forms but knowing your new responsibility living away from home is a big one. It is important to understand that **keeping rooms clean, doing your dishes, taking the trash out**, these basic chores around the house or apartment are things that are less stressful and almost therapeutic when they aren't things that need to be discussed on when to do them, who does them, etc. **It is nice to live in a clean environment**, who doesn't want that? Read our last newsletter where I talk about the benefits of improving your living environment. But doing your part in maintaining that not only makes yourself someone people are comfortable living with but it also gives your living space that good quality that makes you feel a little bit more at ease about living away from home.



What is this Chapter 2 you speak of?

As the title of this newsletter might suggest, there is a big picture about this whole idea of starting college. The experience is dependent on the individual, but my experience in the transition to college is this feeling of starting a new chapter in your life, but the difference from this to the cliché you might often hear about is that this is only chapter 2, **this is the first time you've taken your life to a new chapter**.

Now if you've heard this cliché before, you may have heard it when you went to kindergarten for the first time, or when you started high school, or when you moved to a new town or new country even. The way that you might turn the

pages in those instances are different, and in some of them completely independent, from what it

means to turn this page to this chapter in your life. The fear that many feel when beginning college is the reality that you are simply no longer a kid.

When you get to college, many will be, or will almost be, 18 years old, legally you become an adult in most countries (some dropping that number to 15 and some raising it up to 21). Mentally, you might still feel like a child but when it settles in that you're officially an adult often serves as a reality check for many.

In my own experience, this phenomenon felt like, while I had been told that once I hit high school, or even life steps before that, that this was turning the page to the next chapter. But when I got to college, it suddenly felt like I had been on chapter one for 18 years and was actually just getting to that next chapter. It was something that I was not prepared for since people all my life had told me that I had been moving through the chapters, that this was something like chapter four or five at this point. Suddenly feeling like that had all been little sections of chapter one, I felt unprepared. It was truly this thought of "what had I truly accomplished to this point? Am I really ready for this? To be an adult?"

The simple answer to those questions was a clear cut yes, I had accomplished a lot, and yes, I was ready to be an adult, at least at this age of adulthood. While your experience will be different from mine, most of you will still not be paying taxes, paying rent, paying bills, working a full time career, or anything like that. College serves as a transition period between being a kid and being a full-fledged adult. You are likely living on your own, or at least with more independence, but you will likely still be in school. While college is vastly different than high school or anything you've taken before, it is still a structured system of a school of having classes and doing work and studying. This structure helps us ease into the adult world.



What does this mean for Your Book?

This is a huge step in a young adult's life story which is a daunting feeling that hits many of us very hard when we get to this stage. But it is manageable, despite what those feelings might have you thinking.

Everyone has their own ways of coping with the stressors and pressures of life's changes and developments. A good way to think about this new chapter in your life is to wonder just how this chapter plays into that life story. When reflecting on your life, many people are quick to think about years down the road when we're living out our dreams,

whether that being a parent or traveling the world or working your dream job. My dad told me something not too long ago that really stuck with me. He said:

“When we’re a kid, we dream about being grown up and being an adult. When you’re an adult, you dream about being a kid.”

Of the dreams you had as a kid, **you do not achieve those dreams by becoming an adult.** When you become an adult, your dream job usually does not just get handed to you, you often do not find that perfect person right away, whatever your dream may be. The way more young adults should be thinking about this new chapter is how this is your first step into achieving those dreams. You might no longer be a kid anymore but **you can still live your life for your child-self.** Going to college and going out into the world with responsibilities has many difficulties and struggles but **this is the beginning of achieving those dreams.**

Often when I get daunted by these pressures, I think as if I’m talking back to my younger self. I don’t think about what I would tell him or what I wish I could have him know, I think about what he would tell me, what would my younger self tell me? My younger self would want me to be happy because he will be me in years down the road. I want to create a person that that little boy playing with Lego bricks in his playroom can be excited to grow into.

So if someone ever asks you what you would tell your younger self, tell them that you wouldn’t say anything. That you would listen to that little person and listen to what they want when they grow up. Now whenever the stresses of life hit you now that you’ve embarked on this new journey of yours, think about how everything you do is so you can build a life that would excite your younger self in thinking about how they will grow up and live that kind of a life.

Live a life that your younger self would want when they grow up.

Further resource links:

Adjusting to university life and coping with homesickness. Adjusting to University Life and Coping with Homesickness | Student Health Services. (n.d.).

<https://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral-medicine/behavioral-resources/adjusting-to-university-life-and-coping-with-homesickness/>

Kalakuntla, V. (2021, October 25). *Adjusting to college life: Away from home.* Close the Gap Blog.

<https://blog.closesthegapfoundation.org/college-being-away-from-home/>

Roommate experiences explored. Apartment Living Tips - Apartment Tips from ApartmentGuide.com. (2020, September 23).

<https://www.apartmentguide.com/blog/roommate-experiences-explored/#:~:text=Nearly%2047%25%20of%20people%20surveyed,not%20want%20to%20learn%20firsthand.>



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