How to manage your parents while away at university – a guide for students and parents

Staying in touch with your parents while you're away at university is important, but you need to come to a compromise, set boundaries and understand expectations. According to a recent study published in Springer's Journal of Child and Family Studies, "college students with over-controlling parents are more likely to be depressed and less satisfied with their lives."

Our schedules as university students change from week to week, so parents should call often but don't expect we will always be available for long talks at the same time. Sometimes it's better to have short, frequent talks than long ones once a week. Set up a time each week when you'll both be available to talk without the stress of having to be somewhere.

Parents need to understand that asking too many questions will be perceived as nagging. If we have a problem, we will come to you to talk about it. So don't bug us about the little details such as if we are studying or eating properly. This will lead to hostile conversations, and we will be less likely to answer the phone next time you call. If you allow us to guide the conversation, then we will open up more and actually look forward to your phone calls.

While it may be difficult to let your child make their own decisions, it's not a bad thing if they fail once or twice. It is important for us to learn from our mistakes, not learn from what you say. If we make the mistake once, we are less likely to do it again.

As much as parents want to know about us, the student living away from home wants to know about what's going on at home. So remember to keep us updated on all the latest and greatest so we don't feel too homesick.

Please don't be upset if we aren't always available to talk when you are. Whether we are out with our friends, studying to being involved in a school club, it is probably a good thing. So encourage our activities, instead of getting upset when we aren't available to talk.

Overall, it is tough to stay in contact via phone or email, but allowing us to have some freedom is important. Conversations on the phone are going to change in time and content, but embrace these changes instead of getting upset about them. It will be tough, but it will allow your child to succeed away from home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Entering her final year at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Claire Sargeant is a student majoring in psychology. During the school year, she is actively involved with Queen's Health Outreach, a student-run NGO that promotes international health initiatives. Claire also enjoys working with kids and is a long-time volunteer at Camp Oochigeas, a camp for children affected by cancer. When she graduates, Claire hopes to balance her love of travel and working with kids to promote positive physical and mental health.