

How to Stay Dry-Eyed While Dropping Your “Baby” Off at College

For the 2.3 million American families with teens entering college this fall, the months leading up to “D-Day” (Departure Day) are a roller-coaster ride of emotion, from the joy of graduation to the realization that “My baby is leaving home!” August may have its tense moments as parents struggle to let go and young people chomp at freedom’s bit. How can parents best help their kids, and themselves, process this major life transition?

The key, according to Dr. Lee Liebner, is anticipation and acceptance. “Don’t wait until the last minute to come to emotional terms with this monumental change,” he warns. “The sooner you learn to let go and acknowledge your child’s independence, the sooner you can help him or her gain the self-confidence needed to embark on this new stage of life. And when you do, it will pay dividends not only for your child but also for you and your relationship.”

Dr. Liebner recommends parents take the following steps to ready themselves for D-Day:

- Between rushed visits to Bed, Bath and Beyond, slow down and breathe.
- Set aside some time a couple of days before the big day to look through old photos with your child. You’ll see the present in the context of the whole.
- Embrace change with a full-body hug. Letting go will liberate you.
- Express your feelings. Now is a great time to cry. Let it all out.

Take the time to process this mix of emotions *before* dropping your child off at school, and you greatly improve your chances of staying dry-eyed on D-Day, because the great storm will have already passed. Celebrate this day! Your “baby” is growing up!

Lee Liebner, Ph.D., father of two college students and author of the send-off gift “As You Go (Our Love Will Be With You),” offers tips to help parents navigate this key rite of passage at www.asyougo.net/tips/.