



The Daily Deac

1 message

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To:

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Wake Wednesday

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We're calling each Wednesday this summer as Wake Wednesdays for P'24s – our parents/families of the Class of 2024 who will begin at Wake this fall. While there is nothing technically “due” today on the [First Year Parent and Family Calendar](#), there will be some things due in June, so might be worth your looking ahead.

Today, I want to talk about some of the things you be doing right now to help your '24s prepare for college. While I am gearing this to '24s, this advice really can apply to all years. We'll focus on just four things today:

1. Start allowing your student to be more and more independent until they leave for Wake.

Tell them that starting now, you are going to step back and offer less advice and let them chart their own course and solve their own problems – even (or maybe especially) when it is difficult for them.

Why do this? It's because you already know how to get things done and how to resolve issues. Adults are great problem solvers – and the reason we are good at solving problems is because we had to figure life out (looking at you, latchkey kids and fellow Gen Xers!); we didn't get all the answers spoonfed to us.

When your Deac has an issue, problem, or simply a task that must be accomplished, refrain from giving instructions and directions. If they ask you what to do, instead reply with open-ended questions like these:

What have you thought about?

What options are there?

What are pros and cons of doing that?

Who might be a good resource to provide perspective?

Where might you do some research on this issue?

And here comes the hard part to #1....

2. Let your student make mistakes.

Easy to say, hard to do. But mistakes are how we learn. Mistakes are a necessary part of the process, not something to be feared and avoided at all costs.

For example: for our '24s, course registration will happen in July. Parents and families, please do not do class schedule research for your student, or plan out their coursework. Those jobs are for your student to do. Your student cannot build those important problem solving skills if you are leading the effort.

I often tell families there is no “we” in college – it is *your student's* experience, not your collective experience. Get in the habit now of not asking questions that your student should ask themselves, or helping them do tasks that are required. If there is something your student doesn't know how to do, see #1 above and coach them via reflective questions on how to find the answer.

And if they do not find out the answer and miss a deadline or something, they are going to *learn by that mistake* and likely will never make that mistake again (which is the goal). Pro tip: there are *very few* unrecoverable errors in college – so know that if you are not bird-dogging your student to get something done and they make a mistake, chances are they will be able to rectify it. There may be a consequence – and that is OK. Again, that is how we all learn.

And related to #2...

3. Ensure that your self esteem is not derived from your student's actions or accomplishments.

Get comfortable with the idea that your students are going to make mistakes and that those mistakes are not a reflection on your parenting.

Your students will have triumphs as well as blunders. Those are part of growing up – they are not a judgment on whether you have been a successful parent/family member. Putting pressure – real or imagined – on your student to be perfect or perform perfectly can add a lot of unneeded stress to them. Give them space to learn and grow, and give yourself grace that you have loved and taught your student as well as you could these first 18ish years. You did your best, and so did they.

And related to #3 and things to get comfortable with...

4. Work on being ok with your student's discomfort.

What do I mean by that? There will be times in college where your Deac calls you and they seem like they are really unhappy. We refer to this as the “frantic phone call” [or text, or IM]. They may call you and unload all of these grievances – *this class is too hard, and my roommate is awful, and I didn't get picked for a particular club or leadership position*, etc. They seem really unhappy, and as parents and loved ones, this tends to raise our hackles (I know it does when my 15 year old does it to me).

And when you get the frantic phone call, you may be really unhappy yourself (*I didn't pay all this tuition for my student to have a bad roommate and tough classes and not get into this club!*) and be tempted to act on it in some way. But if you act to fix things, it robs your student of the chance to learn to be resilient in the face of problems.

There is no utopia where everyone is happy every minute of the day. Some days are not great days. Knowing your student is having a bad day doesn't mean it is the end of the world (or that they picked the wrong school, or that everything is awful). Bad days happen to you and me – and they will to our kids too. We need to be OK with that fact that our kids are temporarily unhappy.

More than 20 years in this business tells me that more often than not, if you wait 24 hours and talk to

your Deac again, the things that were bothering them tend to have gone away. Why? Because you are your student's safe place to vent. They want to unload their frustration and process it, and having been heard and affirmed, they are good to go. [Of course if they are still having issues they can't seem to resolve, or the issue is serious, that might be a very appropriate time to help].

Another pro tip: when you get that frantic phone call, ask your student this: "*What is my role here? Do you just need me to listen to you (which I am happy to do)? Or are you asking me for input/help?*" My guess is you'll find more often than not they just want to be heard.

Food for thought on a Wake Wednesday 😊

— by **Betsy Chapman, Ph.D. ('92, MA '94)**

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