



KATY GRADS ARE OFF TO COLLEGE

And the Parents are Left Behind

Parents all over the Katy area are preparing themselves for one of the biggest changes in their life: college. Sure, it's big change for the kids, but what about the parents who are left behind? How do you let your child leave the nest and not worry about them every second of every day? Katy resident Nancy Skopak will be sending her youngest child, Matt, to Baylor University in the fall. She says "From the moment that newborn is placed in our arms, we should be about the process of preparing our kids to leave and preparing ourselves to let go." Easier said than done.

Preparing Your Child Starts Early

To most parents, it seems like yesterday when that little baby was placed in their arms for the first time, yet they are now faced with the realization that their little baby will walk out of the house and start a new life, in a new place, surrounded by new people. What can a parent do to prepare their college-bound teen for that first step into adulthood? Katyite Marian Young knows it's certainly not something that can happen overnight. When her daughter Katie

heads off to Texas A&M Corpus Christi in the fall, she will be taking the knowledge gained from her parents' constant guidance. Young states, "If she wanted to go to a school sporting event, knowing she had a project due that week, we would let her decide if she could handle it or not. Sometimes she was successful and sometimes she wasn't." Natural consequences play a significant role in learning those life lessons.

Believe in Your Child...And in Yourself

The best advice Young can give other parents preparing to send their children to college is to believe they will weather the storms and come out stronger on the other side. "Our kids will rise to this occasion that is before them. There is nothing more valuable than a family who is behind their child from the beginning moment up until that letting go moment." Skopak agrees, "Let your children know that you believe in them and that you're terrifically proud of what they're doing. Tell them often. Let them know you're their biggest cheerleader. When they fall, and we all do, be there to cheer

Taylor HS Graduates Lauren Jagers and Max Leutermann



them on as they get up, regroup, and get back into the race.” Young echoes, “It is a scary thing. You want to know what your children are doing every minute and know they are safe at all times. The thought of “no control” is frightening. At the same time you have to be confident that you’ve done your best in raising them and trust that they’re in good hands.”

Emotional is Normal

Parents agree it’s the letting go that seems to be the most challenging. Yes, you will be emotional about your child’s leaving, though maybe not right away. But somewhere along the way those feelings of sadness, loneliness, frustration, guilt, happiness, and even feeling lost in the silence are all part of the process. Skopak says, “Keep a positive attitude, but know that the emotions that run through your head are for the most part normal.” She’s trying to prepare herself

one day at a time for the “new normal” that awaits her and her husband this fall. “We have to go through it, we need to go through it, and I want to go through it smiling through the tears,” she says.

Goodbye Doesn’t Mean Forever

“I will certainly grieve the loss of that door opening at 3 p.m. and Matt walking in, but I’m so grateful for those memories, and I’m choosing to look forward to the new memories we’re going to make,” says Skopak. Focus on the doors yet to be opened, the new experiences to be encountered by both you and your future college student, and the confidence in knowing that you did all you could



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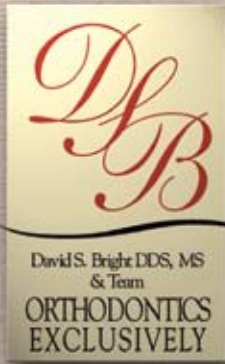
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containerstore.com
- Bed, Bath and Beyond
Bedbathandbeyond.com



to prepare him for adulthood. In that moment of goodbye it's important to focus on the reason you are saying those two words-- to let your son or daughter experience their own life apart from you. It's about showing each child they have the support and unconditional love that will always be at the same address, home. **KM**

HEATHER LOWRIE is a former fourth grade teacher and mother of two. She is married to her high school sweetheart, James. She is a freelance writer and author of The Inspired Wife who enjoys the opportunity to encourage people through her writing.

TOP COLLEGE CHOICES FOR KATY STUDENTS

Whether your kids want to stay close to home or venture far away, Texas and the surrounding states have colleges and universities to suit your family's needs.

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Abilene, TX
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