

# Transitions can be bumpy at best

*Editor's note: "The Home Front" is a column on parenting strategies, couples' challenges and other relationship issues by the partners at Woodland Professional Associates in North Hampton.*

Transitions can be exciting, scary, hopeful, overwhelming and full of adventure. As parents, we not only experience these emotions for ourselves, but also from our children. We need to be prepared to encounter our own turmoil as we travel with them through their changes. Transitions are both opportunity and loss.

Recently, I attempted to discuss my daughter's up and coming graduation. Her response was, "I don't want to discuss the G word." I thought, "That's impossible." I am constantly thinking about her graduating and what will follow. To me, it's unavoidable.

In New Hampshire this year there will be about 15,000 high school gradu-

ates, 9,000 college graduates, as well as junior high, elementary and kindergarten students who will be moving on. This suggests at

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least 100,000 parents and step-parents dealing with the complexities of transitions. As parents, we primarily focus on how our children are coping with the impending changes, yet we experience a gamut of feelings too. What can we expect from them? What can we expect from ourselves and, how can we assure that these transitions unfold as smoothly as possible?

I remember one late winter evening, looking in my family room and noticing

my youngest daughter as she was watching television. She was crying. I inquired about her sadness. She began sobbing and stated, "What if I don't get into any colleges." Waiting, not knowing, not hearing right away can be grueling. In response, I could understand her fears. I assured her that she had worked hard and had applied to schools that were within her reach.

As parents, how can we approach this experience of transitions? I believe there are three areas we can be mindful.

### Dealing with transitions from the inside out

The internal process includes coping with stress, trusting your internal voice and sustaining confidence in your child. For example, how does your daughter/son deal with anxiety in moving into a new school setting? Or, how do you deal with your child being anxious?

It is also important to ad-

dress what you can realistically expect from your child and yourself. You will need to assess your resources, your child's abilities and determine what steps will most likely lead to a good outcome.

### Shifting boundaries

We encounter transitions as we move from point A to point B. Developmentally, our child is becoming more self-sufficient, and we lessen our control. Shifting boundaries is an important aspect of the transition. As a parent, often we struggle with when to push them and when to back away. The college application process, for example, has a number of deadlines.

For parents and the young adult it is often overwhelming and a son/daughter could easily feel "stuck" at some point. Often this is the time to work collaboratively.

It is time to address your student's fears, to assist them in gaining more knowledge, if needed, and