

College Kids Home for Summer

You are so excited. Your college freshman just completed his first year and he is home for the summer. You welcome him with open arms and help carry all his clothes and stuff to his bedroom. Summer is going to be great.

Then reality sets in. He goes out that night and you don't see him until 3:00am. You've called his cell phone since midnight (the previous high school curfew) and yet he hasn't called back. You are worried that something has happened. You raised him to be responsible. "How could he do this?" you wonder.

The door opens and in he walks. You are so relieved that he is okay but, you are angry with his attitude. "Geez, Mom, I'm fine. It's not even 4 yet!" he says as he heads to bed.

Whoa, what just happened? What you expected for the summer and what he expected are different.

As a parent, we often forget what it is like to leave our parents' home, live on our own, with our own rules for nine months and then move back under our parents' roof. The recently returned college student often believes he should have no rules. After all, he has had virtually no parental rules while at school other than the usual "get good grades."

So, how can you maintain our sanity and your relationship with your teen? Discuss expectations and set boundaries to lessen conflict. Money, curfew, household responsibilities and family expectations are key issues that will make or break your summer.

- Money – is the teen responsible for all monetary needs or will the parents pay for clothes, hygiene products, eating out, entertainment, gas, car insurance, etc?
- Work - is the teen expected to get a job and if so, is the money to be saved for next year's college expenses, used this summer or both?
- Curfew – is there a curfew? If so, negotiate an appropriate weeknight and week-end curfew.
- Household responsibilities – what tasks is the teen expected to complete? His own laundry, take out trash, cook, etc?
- Family expectations – is the teen expected to eat dinner with the family? Go to Grandma's on Thursday? Provide transportation or child care for younger siblings? Go to church on Sunday mornings?

These are just a few of the questions you need to discuss with your teen. Have the conversation now so you are clear on what is expected. Remember, your teen has had independence and freedom at college but you, as a parent, have the right to have peace and order in your household. Set the boundaries and compromise so your family has a great summer together.