

College Ready Guide for Parents

College is a challenging step for any high school student, especially for those with executive functioning challenges, ADHD, autism, anxiety, or depression. Preparation and support from parents is crucial.

The team at Northwest College Support has worked for the past 15 years with students who fail at college and need extra support to get back on track. We want to share those experiences with families so they can better prepare for college success.

Here are some actionable steps you can take to ensure your child is ready for this next phase:

1. Encourage Time Management:

It's important that your child starts developing time management skills while still in high school. Demonstrate how to break down tasks into subtasks, delegate sufficient time for each task, and prioritize based on deadlines and difficulty. Use visual aids like calendars or schedule apps, and discuss the value of balancing work, school, and leisure time.

2. Teach Interview and Communication Skills:

Many college processes involve interviews. Practice active listening, clear communication, maintaining eye contact, and how to ask insightful questions. These skills will benefit your child not only for admission but throughout their college life and beyond.

3. Schedule Their Own Appointments:

Your teenager should start scheduling their own appointments. They might resist initially or make mistakes, but it's better to make those mistakes while they still have your support. This will teach them to deal with real-world situations, improving their executive functioning abilities.

4. Instill Independent Wake-Up Habits:

Waking up independently is an essential skill. Encourage your child to set their own alarm, and get used to getting up and ready for the day without your prompt. It may be difficult initially, but consistency and perseverance will make it a habit.

5. Promote Self-management of medication:

If your child is on medication, guiding them to manage it independently is vital. Start with supervision, then gradually pull back as they demonstrate capability. Make sure they understand the reason for medication, the dosage and timing, and can securely store it.

6. Address Mental Health Regularly:

If your child has anxiety or depression, regular conversations about maintaining mental health are critical. Encourage them to feel comfortable with sharing their feelings and seeking professional help if needed. Discuss the resources available at college and promote proactive behavior.

7. Stress the Importance of Nutrition:

Educate your child about the importance of a balanced diet and how it can directly influence their cognition and mood. Learning basic cooking and shopping for groceries are vital life skills that can also promote their health.

8. Teach Budgeting and Financial Responsibility:

College students will face a myriad of financial decisions. Teach your child basics like tracking their spending, setting a budget, and fiscal responsibility. Start with small amounts and gradually give them more autonomy.

9. Encourage Independence:

While you are always there to support, it's essential to let your child handle everyday tasks independently. This encourages problem-solving, resilience, and confidence, which will significantly assist in college.

10. Initiate Early Exposure:

If possible, plan some visits to colleges to give your child a feel for life on a college campus. This can greatly reduce anxiety, and sets more accurate expectations.

11. Role-play Common Scenarios:

Help your child feel prepared by role-playing common situations that may arise in college such as asking for help, dealing with roommates, or trying new activities. This will help them practice problem-solving in a safe environment.

12. Be Honest and Reassuring:

Discussion about fears and worries of college life need to be addressed. Reassure your child that facing challenges is natural, and give them the confidence that they can face them and grow.

Your child's course into adulthood and college might look different than others', but with understanding, love, preparation, and these practical steps, you can help them make that journey successfully. At Northwest College Support, we are committed to helping students like your child navigate these experiences. Support your child, be there for them, and most importantly, celebrate their achievements. They are on their way to becoming independent adults and responsible college students.

For more information, go to: collegesupportnw.com