

How to Parent a Geneva College Student Who is Now Your Roommate
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Suddenly your house is full of those college students whom you thought had left the nest. Yes, you were anticipating they would show up mid-May looking for their room again, but it's mid-March and they've shown up already?? We have all been impacted by COVID-19 in many ways, and having your child move back home may just be one more item on the list of inconveniences.

Of course you love your child and you are so glad they are safe, but their intrusion has not only wrecked your open guest room, sunroom, or basement ambiance, but you now have another mouth to feed, and a young adult living in your home who is mourning their loss and the rapid change in the expectations for their spring semester. So, how do you cope? How do you establish rules, boundaries, and enjoy this time while your immediate family may be the only humans you can allow within six feet?

Here are a few tips I've gathered from my years working with college students and helping them to transition well:

Grace in a Season of Transition

First, remember that you are all in a season of transition. Your student may be feeling sad and overwhelmed with the uncertainty. They may have dreamed how they would enjoy the completion of this academic year, the people they would spend time with, the activities or sports, or they may be a senior who has been looking forward to this moment for the past three-plus years of their college career.

Your student needs time to be able to process through these feelings with open communication. **Ask open ended questions. Don't expect full answers.** Many will not be able to gather their thoughts since there is still so much uncertainty and adjustment, but you can help them know that you are there for them when they are ready to process. **Expect them to have a variety of emotions and feelings** about this transition. If you notice your student seems depressed or exhibits signs of anxiety, **encourage them to reach out to Counseling Services.** It will help them to be able to open up and talk to somebody. **Give yourself grace** as well during this transition. You may lose your "cool" when you notice they drank the last of your coffee, but this is a season of transition and you are all learning how to be roommates again.

Establish a New Normal Together

This is also a time to **establish a new normal** with your nest feeling a bit more crowded. There may be expectations for them to get up at a certain time or to take part in family activities or chores. Talk to your student and **create these expectations together.** Allow them to weigh in on what they can do. Help them to **establish daily habits and rhythms** and ask how you can help, while also establishing your own. During this season where everything feels outside of our

control, it's helpful if we can **take control over small things**, like what time we get up in the morning, when we do work/school, and when we exercise. But remember for your student, this isn't summer break.

Your student is still taking all their classes online and may not have the same amount of time or energy to spend with you after spending 6 hours of their day on class discussion boards and online learning portals. Help them **set up a quiet space** where they can focus on schoolwork. If they seem overwhelmed with academics you can also suggest they **reach out to their professors**. We are all experiencing a learning curve, but professors can't help unless students reach out and seek to connect.

Stay Social

And that brings me to my final piece of advice, **encourage your student to stay social**. Many students will treat this time like summer break, when they reach out to their friends sparingly and just wait until August to reconnect. But your student needs the same social support now as they did when they were on campus. If they used to eat lunch with a group of friends, encourage them to have a group FaceTime call over lunch. If they used to watch movies with their roommate every Friday night, then **encourage them to continue that tradition virtually**. This will help your student to remember that they are not the only one "stuck at home" during this season. And the best way we can help our students connect with others is if we model that at home. **We are called to live in community**. If you're feeling overwhelmed with the changes and transitions, then get involved with a digital community of friends, a virtual church in your area, or start an extended family Zoom chat.

It's likely your student has never lived on this earth during a crisis such as this. They're probably scared by the uncertainty. This is an amazing opportunity for families to join together and share their fears and share what they are reading and learning that is helpful. It's an important time to laugh and enjoy the lighthearted moments and to respond with grace. **We are all in this together as we navigate the uncertainty and we can trust a God that never wavers but offers us grace and love in the most certain and consistent ways.**

*Students can schedule counseling session on the website: https://www.geneva.edu/student-life/services/counseling-center/counseling_services_form