

## **This is Your Life: Adolescents Leaving Home**

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When I was a kid, we watched a television program called "This is Your Life." It was usually about a celebrity, and many people would show up, entering through a door of some kind to surprise the honoree with tales of the life they had lived up until that point. Many of the stories were full of fun and humor and not only highlighted the person's talents but also some of their mistakes. The tone of the show was upbeat and not that of criticism. Thus, it showcased the person's life from many angles.

I like to think of the transition young adults (emerging adolescents) make from their senior year of high school to this theme, "This is Your Life!" Indeed it is their life, and parents are painfully aware of the strengths and weaknesses they have seen in their children throughout the years. Our job as parents is to remember we are encouraging them to think, and to be thoughtful about their decisions as they move through this time.

The changes they are going through are many: emotional changes, social changes, mental changes, financial changes and spiritual changes. I believe every parent wants to navigate this period well, although at times it can be turbulent partly because the young adult has a different set of priorities than the parent. This would be summarized in the brief but ever so common interaction: "Take care of this now!" and "No, I'll do it later." (Of course, these interactions serve to bond parents together even more tightly).

Here are a few questions you can ask yourself during those two transitional years from senior year to first year away from home:

Do you remember leaving home? Did you feel encouraged? Did you feel supported? Did you receive too much help? Did you feel controlled by your parent's agenda? Did you experience too little involvement by your parents for guidance?

Our experiences shape us. They sometimes cause us to react. They sometimes provoke a decision to do things differently. Be aware of where you are coming from. Then think about these questions:

*What do you hope you remember when you look back on this experience?  
What do you hope your son/daughter remembers when they look back on this experience?*

I hope my children remember me as encouraging. I hope they remember I believe in their ability to figure things out. I hope they remember that I delight in them. I hope they remember that they are not defined by their mistakes. I hope they

remember every good thing they have been taught. What do you hope for?