

Ask Miriam...

Individuals and families in the community are faced with challenging issues and concerns regarding their social, emotional and psychological health. Through the cooperation of **The Jewish World**, Jewish Family Services will offer responses.

Q. Dear Miriam,

My son is a senior in college and as the time grows near for him to return to school, he shows that he is uneasy about going back. I've tried to help build some enthusiasm about this being his final year and then he can get on with his life, enter a new phase. This approach doesn't seem to get through. In fact I think it is making him more nervous. I would like to see him leave for school in an upbeat mood and then apply himself to finishing this part of his education.

Do you have any suggestions about how to help him get ready for his senior year?

Stuck Mom

A. Dear Stuck Mom,

In your effort to help your son you may be increasing his anxiety. A significant percentage of students do not finish college in four years. It is not unusual for students to take five or more years to complete their undergraduate education. Instead of being excited about graduating from college, your son may be anxious about having the responsibility of being on his own; unsure where he is heading in his life, and/or feel ill equipped to compete in the work world. You may be making it hard for him to express these things since he doesn't want to disappoint you.

Ask him if he is concerned about this being his last year of college. Does he feel ready to graduate? Hopefully you can open up some discussion to see what may be bothering him. Let him know you will be supportive of him even if it means coming home for a period of time after graduation. It may relieve some of his anxiety just to know you don't expect him to have a job lined up the day after graduation. However, as the year progresses, he should develop a plan and time frame for himself for when he graduates.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

My children, husband, and I have had a wonderful summer and are looking forward to the start of the school year.

My husband and I had planned that after this summer I would go back to work, and this will be the first time I've been in the work force in six years. (Our oldest child is six and the youngest is four.) I have been trying to prepare the children for the upcoming changes. It seems that the more I try to prepare them for my going back to work, the more they cling to me and they seem to get upset easily.

What can I do to make sure that they are okay when school starts and I go back to work?

Worried Mom

A. Dear Worried Mom,

You are about to enter a period of change in your life. I have a sense you are feeling the impending change more than you are openly acknowledging. Your children are probably reacting to what they sense as your worry and anxiety.

This is a family affair and the whole family is involved.

Replace some of the anxiety with structure.

What will each family member's role be in contributing to the family?

What, to the best of your knowledge, will be different for each family member?

What are some of the favorite activities your family does now and how will those activities change?

What new and exciting things might happen because you will be working?

Prepare yourself and your family for a period of adjustment which is normal. Don't expect that you have to make everything

immediately fall into place.

A creative and positive approach to this new experience will make all of your lives happier.

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Miriam Adler, A.C.S.W., C.S.W., is assistant director of J.F.S. She answers most frequently asked questions. Please send questions to "Ask Miriam," c/o Jewish Family Services of NENY, 877 Madison Ave., Albany, NY 12208 or e-mail madler@jfsneny.org or call 518-482-8856.

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