My parents and I surprisingly got along all through high school. I was obedient, studious, and for the most part, stayed out of trouble. Being a model teenager afforded me the trust of my parents. I didn’t have curfew nor did my parents breathe down my neck about my schoolwork. This trust was the foundation of the new relationship I developed with my parents as I transitioned through college.

After a long summer of anticipating how my life would change, finally August came and my dad and I headed up to Marquette on move in day. After hauling all of my belongings into my dorm room it was time for my Dad to leave. Even though I had just met my roommate five minutes ago my Dad still had to leave for work. Watching him get in his car and drive away was one of the most challenging moments of my life. I was trying to act composed, but on the inside I was more nervous than I had ever been. I was in a foreign city and even though I was only 50 minutes away from home, it immediately felt like it was an ocean away. I remember wishing that my mother had come, but then I imagined her crying refusing to leave her baby boy and quickly changed my mind.

My nervous feelings quickly dissipated as I started to get involved in Orientation activities. My first week of college was thrilling. Not a moment when by when I wasn’t meeting new people or enjoying all that Marquette had to offer. Sadly, as the weekend came I found myself in the basement of McCormick doing my laundry when another student stumbled in, clearly confused. After watching him try to find where to pour the soap for nearly three minutes I realized that this student had never done laundry before in his life.

Seeing him struggle made me feel overwhelmingly homesick. Even though it had been only a few days since my dad dropped me off, I missed all of the little things my parents would do for me such as laundry, cooking, and driving me places. I would have given anything to be eating BLT’s with my Mom on a Monday night or simply watching a Bears game with my dad. Looking back I realize that my mother didn’t just teach me where to pour the soap in the washing machine, but my parents had been preparing me to step out on my own for the last eighteen years.

Throughout the remainder of my freshmen year I called home every few days in order to update them on every new discovery, friend, or grade I made. Luckily for them, I developed healthier boundaries my sophomore year which let them enjoy their peace and quiet now that all the kids are out of the house.

College has helped me grow into a more mature adult and although I started with a strong relationship with my parents it has changed quite a bit. Our relationship has evolved to resemble more of an equal friendship. I find myself helping my parents more and more as I get older which is sometimes a big responsibility, but I am glad that I can finally repay them for all of the sacrifices they made for me.

If I could give you any advice as parents of incoming freshmen it would be this: Regardless of how prepared your children are for college they will fail at something whether it is grades, relationships, or doing laundry for the first time. Be there to support your student for sure, but know when to just listen. If you step in to help them with a problem that they can handle—and let me tell you that they can handle much more than you think—you are essentially telling them that they are not capable of doing it themselves. Trust your student. Give him or her total support regardless of the life they choose. College is a time of exploration and discovery, and while you may not agree with every choice your student makes, trust that they are growing into the adults you have helped them to become. Make sure that they know that your love is unreserved and that you will always be in their corner. Finally, treasure the time you have with your sons and daughters. College flies by quickly as many of you know. Make the best of every phone call and visit often. And enjoy watching your student change in ways you can’t even imagine right now.