

ASK A PARENT with Dufferin Parent Support Network



University takes adjustment for students and their families

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Back to school was always my favourite time of year. New clothes, new school supplies, the smell of leaves turning, a chill in the air...the things I love the most. This year, however, autumn takes on a whole new meaning.

This September marked my oldest son's journey to university and his independence—with a cellphone to keep in touch, of course.

He has to take the bus around his new city, do his laundry, shop for groceries, and get to both school and karate classes.

While it's sad to see him "leave the nest" and grow up, it's exciting to see him take on life on his own terms.

Some of the values we have instilled in him will follow him through life. Other ideas and concepts, he will change and make his own.

Odd how it seems that it was only a week ago my 18-year-old was a newborn, and then a toddler.

Suddenly he's a grown man who held his first job, learned to drive, and graduated from high school.

I'd be lying if I said I haven't shed a tear. In fact, I'm having a hard time typing now with tears in my eyes.

The house seems bigger without him, the nights quieter. I miss going for walks with him and hearing the latest books he's read, line for line.

His younger brothers have moments when they miss him most and text him often.

Bedtime was their time to all goof around upstairs until either someone got hurt or I'd go up to send them all to bed. Saturday night, traditionally "Nerd Night," when the men of the house play video games and eat junk food, carries on, waiting for his return. Even the cat has yet to adjust and follows the rest of us everywhere.

Even with one less child, life is always busy and we focus on the positives. We keep in touch with texts at the end of the day and get to spend a weekend at the university in early October.

Christmas will be noisier and more exciting than usual. I plan to restock his grocery supply, watch him do laundry (yeah, right!) and get him ready for his second semester.

Of course, there are a few upsides to having one less teenager in the house. The food bill has dropped slightly. I can clean his room without taking my life in my hands. There is a tad less arguing.

The advice I gave him before he left: Work hard. Have fun. Get involved.

Only three more years until the next one leaves. Better stock up on tissues.

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