

Tools for Supporting Your Upper School Student

When asked what parents want most for their children, the most common answer is, “I want my child to be happy.” Of course we do! In order for children to be happy in childhood and into their adult years, in order to recognize joy and satisfaction, they also must experience disappointment, failure, frustration, even anger. In our role as educators and parents, we can model regulation of these uncomfortable and temporary feelings. Chances are that you learned life lessons through frustration, failure, or even loss. So, what can we do as the trusted adults in their lives to nurture the roots of happiness in our children and students?

You can...	Try to avoid...
<p>Listen to your child, validate their feelings. Our children need us to be a safe landing spot. We want them to come to us with their problems and trust that we will listen and be honest with our feedback.</p>	<p>...joining them in their emotional state. We can listen and validate without taking on the work. Growing up is messy work and it's expected.</p>
<p>It all starts with communication, and the communication can begin with your child. Schedule a time to talk with your child and review how things are going. Simply asking, “How are things going?” can often get a conversation started, and sometimes our students need more direction. Other ways to begin a conversation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I've noticed that you seem _____ lately. I'd love to know what's happening for you and how I can help. ● What is something you did at school this week that you really enjoyed? ● I heard from your advisor/teacher that you haven't been turning in your work. Why do you think this is happening? How can I help you get back on track? ● What do you think could do more/less at school? ● What questions did you ask in class today? What questions were you thinking about but didn't ask aloud? ● What fired you up today - a comment from a classmate, a topic in class, sports practice/game? 	<p>...going straight to the teacher or administrator. Instead, our children need us to be their allies instead of antagonists.</p> <p>...having conversations when emotions are elevated. Give space and time for things to settle and revisit when the conversation can be held in a calm way.</p> <p>...pepper your child with questions about their day and not share anything about yours. Consider creating ritual around conversations and how your family talks/shares about their day.</p>
<p>Be careful not to confuse rigor with workload. Balance is one of our Core Values at Laguna. If your child is having difficulty completing work on time, getting at least 8 hours of sleep a night, or saying they have too much to do and don't have time for friends or a social life, it's time to evaluate their schedule and classes. The goal for our children</p>	<p>...ignoring the issue and encouraging more, more, more.</p> <p>...comparing your child with others. We all respond differently to stress and rigor. Just because one person can efficiently manage a full schedule doesn't mean everyone can.</p>

<p>is to become happy, healthy, kind people and not to participate in every activity and take every AP test.</p>	<p>...remember, your child is not your masterpiece.</p>
<p>Get comfortable with the F word. We're talking about Failure. Now is the time to learn life lessons around deadlines, honoring commitments, and effective communication skills. When our children experience failure while living at home, we are able to support them as they recover, recognize where change can happen, and steer them in a "course correction." Resilience pays off long after high school.</p> <p>If you'd like to hear more, this podcast with Rachel Simmons describes how to help our kids <i>fail well</i>.</p>	<p>...requesting modifications or deadline extensions.</p> <p>...seeing mistakes as the problem with growing up. These are the golden nuggets of adolescence. Recognizing and reflecting on mistakes are where we do our best learning and strengthen our relationships with ourselves, our classmates, our friends, our families, and our communities.</p>
<p>Reach out for support - we are here for you. Talk with your child and share what you are noticing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I noticed that you're spending less time doing _____. Is there anything you want me to know? Are you okay?" • Talk with their advisor, Ms. Alkire, or Ms. Valentine who can offer a window into your child's day at school. 	<p>...wishing and hoping things will get better - they have not proven to be effective tools of support.</p>