Staying connected, but not **too** connected...

**Helicopter Parent**: a mother or father that hovers over a child; an overprotective parent

**Know the best time to connect and stick to it** Recognize your teen is trying to fit in and adjust. His/her roommate may not appreciate your 7 am wake-up calls. Ask what are the best times and dates to connect and by what method: text, phone, email or mail.

**Computer Contact** Emails can be short or long. Because they are so quick and easy to send, you may find yourself unintentionally overdoing it. But unless your child indicates that you are sending her too many emails (several per day may fit that category) I wouldn't worry too much about how many emails you are sending.

**Letters...the "Other Mail"** There’s nothing quite like opening your college mailbox and finding a letter from home — a long, juicy letter from home. There’s just something almost magical about opening up a formerlly empty box and finding that something has appeared there for you. All letters don’t have to be long or juicy. Be they a 10-page epic written on both sides of the paper, or a single comic strip that your child would find amusing, keep those letters coming!

**Care Packages** The sight of a care package from home in the dorm's mail delivery room has left many a college student weak-kneed and salivating (especially if the smells wafting from the wrapped package are strong enough to be recognizable). They’re a guaranteed hit and loving connection. So start baking those lemon squares!

Whether it’s through emails, letters, phone calls, or college visits, it’s what and how you communicate to your kids that determine how well you stay connected. Unconditional love, support, and understanding should underscore all your communications. Don’t use your communications primarily as opportunities to grill your kids: How much time are you spending studying in the library? How much sleep are you getting on weekdays? Are you drinking or doing drugs? Why haven’t you written your grandmother more?

There are ways to get a feel for how your child is faring in school — academically, socially, and emotionally — without repeatedly putting her through "The Inquisition" when you contact him/her. Open-ended questions that show an interest in his/her life — "Is introductory biology as tough as you expected?" "How’s the roommate situation?" "Have you had much time to have a social life, given your studies and playing basketball?" — are always better than questions and comments with built-in expectations, blame, and guilt: "You do remember the GPA you have to maintain to keep your scholarship, don’t you?" "How can you get any studying done in this room?" "We’d appreciate some idea of whether you’re passing or flunking your courses!"

You have means at your disposal to maintain and even deepen your relationship with your child enrolled in college. Explore them all and you’ll soon discover a comfortable, varied communication rhythm and frequency to keep you connected.