

Letting go & becoming independent: parallel transitions for parents & high schoolers

Melissa Fasteau, PsyD
Wes Clayton, LCSW,
CDWF

Ginny Fullerton, PhD
Christen Sistrunk, MA,
LPC-S

Agenda

Introduction: The Struggle is Real

The End of An Era: Closing out the High School Years

The Next Step: College Prep

How OCD affects the Transition to College

What to Expect: The To-Dos

Coping with Challenges

Case examples: Navigating Speedbumps



“Dude, it’s just college.”

The End of An Era: Closing out the High School Years

Huge Milestones! Huge Congratulations!

Mixed feelings: relief, sadness, guilt, fear, excitement

Stress related to endings may mean increased anxiety, increased symptoms

Saying goodbye to close friends/family/therapists, or making plans for how to stay connected

Looking ahead

Transitioning to College: The Struggle is Real

In 2020-2021, over 60% college students reported mental health problems.

Nearly 50% increase from 2013!

This data highlights the urgency of reducing mental health inequalities in college student populations

Kahoot!

The Next Step: College Prep

Becoming independent is a huge developmental shift/hurdle.

Suddenly, you're an adult and expectations change.

“Fail to plan, plan to fail.”

Not everything is going to go as planned, but it is important to have a plan.

How OCD affects the Transition to College

+ OCD



Loops of worry and indecision

Contamination fears

Need to be sure

Plagiarism anxiety

Intrusive thoughts

Compulsive avoidances

Rituals

- Checking or repeating your work
- Seeking reassurance
- Making sure things are perfect, just right, clean, organized...

+ Extra Impact of OCD



Inefficiency

Taking too many breaks and falling behind

Procrastination and maybe full-on avoidance

Distraction with technology and losing track of time

Difficulty keeping a schedule and daily structure

+ Extra Impact of OCD



Overwhelmed by day-to-day
tasks and decisions
Getting frustrated and down
on yourself
Depending on extra help from
teachers and parents
Self-advocacy,
accommodation concerns
Appointments



The First Day

What to Expect: Tasks and Challenges

Challenges

- What do you think some of the challenges will be during your first year of college?



Challenges

- What do you think some of the challenges will be during your first year of college?
- Relocating
- Increased independence
- Time management
- Living with a roommate
- Building social communities
- Managing mental and physical health
- Managing expectations for yourself and parents

Putting the Pieces Together

Increasing self-reliance and independence

Schedule skills

- You're a pro
- They likely aren't

Let's get social



Challenges with OCD in College



- Many changes at once can be overwhelming
- Reduced family support
- Reduced family accommodation
- Roommate may not understand OCD
- Potential for struggling in silence
- Values can be confused for OCD
- Perfectionism

Increasing Self-Reliance: For the Teen/Young Adult

Making decisions

- Thinking independently
- Being different is okay
- Knowing your goals

Self-Compassion

- Being your own cheerleader

It's a team effort and it's okay (even necessary!) to ask for help.



Increasing Your Adult Child's Self-Reliance: For the Parent

It's time to start letting go

It's a team effort!

Allow your soon-to-be adult/adult children
the **opportunity** to mess up



Managing your Schedule: For the Teen/Young Adult

All work and no play

Use a calendar

Virtual Calendars are great

Don't rely on the virtual university calendar

Don't rely on anyone else to know your schedule

Coordinate with your roommates, parents, professors



Schedule skills: Teaching your Teen/Young Adult

How do you know what you know as a parent?

Are you demonstrating life-work balance?

Where to go and what to do?

Don't call!

If they mess up, they mess up... *and* IT is okay for them to get it wrong. Getting it wrong is how we eventually get it right!

Building a Social Community: For the Teen/Young Adult

How do we *make and maintain* new relationships?

- Common or shared interest
- Time investment
- Communication
- Showing up and Saying Yes

Reaching out to friends and getting together in-person...not just virtually!!

Regular connections

Building a Social Community: For the Parent

Educating your child on reaching out to friends

Modeling how to maintain friendships and support while busy

Encouraging your child to be open

Navigating New Roads

Coping strategies for college transition

- Create small goals to work on OCD
- Have a list of coping strategies
- Practice exposure goals
- Speak with your support system about how they can help you in college
- Daily wellness strategies (sleep, eat, exercise, mindfulness)
- Balance school, work, social activities, and fun
- Track substance use (alcohol, caffeine, other substances)
- Consistency with medication

Challenges:

Incorporating Your Exposures

- Practice coping plan before leaving for college (including exposures)
- If possible, visit college campus before moving to practice coping plan
- Bring your hierarchy to college (a picture on your phone will do!)
- Exposures to practice independently
- Think through public exposures in advance

Coping with Common Challenges

Finding a Therapist

- Can I still use my current therapist in college?

Should Sessions be Virtual or In Person?

How to Find a Provider?

The screenshot shows the IOCDF website's search interface. The top navigation bar includes the IOCDF logo, "Who We Are", "Recovery & Support", "For Professionals", and "Our Websites". A search bar is present with "DONATE" and "ESPAÑOL" buttons. The main content area is divided into three sections: "Find Help", "Learn More About OCD", and "Get Involved". The "Find Help" section is active, showing a search for "Houston, TX, USA" within a "10 mi" radius. A dropdown menu for "Listing Types" is open, showing options: "Clinics & Programs (3)", "Support Groups (1)", and "Therapist (30)". Below the search bar, there are several links: "Find a Therapist of Color", "Research Studies", "How to Find the Right Therapist", "Help for Kids", "Resource Directory: Definitions of Search Terms", "Help for Hoarding Disorder", "Support Groups & Treatment Groups", "Help for Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)", "Clinics & Programs", and "Anxiety in the Classroom". At the bottom, there are three columns of text: "Find Help" (Search the Resource Directory for therapists, clinics, support groups, and other organizations specializing in OCD and related disorders in your area), "Learn More About OCD" (OCD and related disorders affect more than 1 in 100 people around the world — but there is hope. Learn about treatment, research, and other resources that can help), and "Get Involved" (There are many ways to get more involved in the OCD and related disorders community — join us today!).

The screenshot shows the IOCDF website's search interface with a map of Houston. The top navigation bar is the same as in the previous screenshot. The main content area is divided into three sections: "Find Help", "Learn More About OCD", and "Get Involved". The "Find Help" section is active, showing a search for "Houston, TX, USA" within a "10 mi" radius. A dropdown menu for "Listing Types" is open, showing options: "Clinics & Programs (3)", "Support Groups (1)", and "Therapist (30)". Below the search bar, there are several links: "Find a Therapist of Color", "Research Studies", "How to Find the Right Therapist", "Help for Kids", "Resource Directory: Definitions of Search Terms", "Help for Hoarding Disorder", "Support Groups & Treatment Groups", "Help for Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)", "Clinics & Programs", and "Anxiety in the Classroom". At the bottom, there are three columns of text: "Find Help" (Search the Resource Directory for therapists, clinics, support groups, and other organizations specializing in OCD and related disorders in your area), "Learn More About OCD" (OCD and related disorders affect more than 1 in 100 people around the world — but there is hope. Learn about treatment, research, and other resources that can help), and "Get Involved" (There are many ways to get more involved in the OCD and related disorders community — join us today!).

The map shows several provider locations in Houston, including "The Home Depot", "The Houston Farmers Market", "Pinkett Barbecue", "White Oak Music Hall", "Dolan Park", "Memorial Park", "The Houston Aquarium", and "The Original Nanga".

Provider details listed on the right:

- Melissa Fasteau, PsyD**
Psychologist
3303 Louisiana Street
Suite 200
Houston, Texas 77006
713-993-3032
- Christen Sistrunk, LPC**
Counselor
4203 Montrose
Suite 480
Houston, Texas 77006
832-283-9199
- Alejandra Seruena, PhD**
Psychologist
4203 Montrose Blvd Suite 430

IOCDF, ADAA, ABCT, Good Therapist, Psychology Today, NAMI, Support Groups (In-Person/Online)

How Do I Locate New Provider Near My College?

How do I find a new OCD therapist?

What questions should I ask my new therapist?

What is your training and background in treating OCD?

Are you willing to leave your office to do behavioral therapy?

Additional things to consider (medication, practice specialties, therapist's expertise)

How Do I Locate New Provider Near My College?

Factors to Consider:

Proximity to campus

- Transportation
- Confidentiality
- Community size
- Virtual vs. in person

Cost

When should I start this process? **ASAP!**

Advocacy Off College Campus

What is Health Insurance?

Need to know: Basic Insurance

- In-Network vs Out-of-Network
- Copay vs Out-of-Pocket
- Deductible
- Referral
- Primary Care Physician (PCP)
- Dependent

Contact your insurance provider to locate in-network therapist that may be OCD-trained

Advocacy On College Campus

Campus Counseling Center

- Teletherapy vs In-Person
- Session Limits vs Frequency Limits
- OCD Trained Clinicians
- Individual/Group Therapy
- Therapy vs. Psychiatry
- High Caseloads (Counselors:Student)

Campus Wellness Center

- Case managers connect students to campus resource and help students navigate wellness concerns.
 - Support navigating residential/dorm concerns
 - Help students with medical/wellbeing separations and returns
 - Support navigating academic concerns

Wellness Center and Counseling Centers are different, but great points of contact for general support.

Advocacy On College Campus (CONT)

Peer-to-Peer Counseling Services

- Specially trained students that provide counseling support to fellow students. (Empathy, Mentoring, handling suicidality)

College Wellness Apps

- Apps help students set goals, build healthy habits, and connect to support

OCD APPS (Best used in conjunction with OCD therapy)

- GG OCD
- nOCD
- Talk Space

Making an Informed College Decision

- Finding OCD-Specific resources on college campuses can be tough.
- Remember to use your OCD specific resource and questions to find a therapist
- When deciding on a college, College Wellness Programs are key!
 - Research wellness programs that may exist at your university:
 - Counseling Centers
 - Peer-to-Peer Support
 - Fitness and Recreation Programs
 - Wellness Apps
 - Faculty-Specific Wellness Training
- Considering what best for your OCD/Mental Health is a decision that you will not regret.

Case Examples: Navigating Speedbumps

Megan

20 year old female attending university away from home

- OCD, trichotillomania, perfectionism
 - Checking behaviors (navigating in conjunction with roommates)
 - Re-reading, re-writing - very time consuming (emails, essays)

Challenges

- Filling out accommodation forms; appeal letters
- Learning to advocate for extended time
- Deciding on what a professor “needs to know”
- Exposures while navigating roommate life
- Exposures when the stakes are high (GPA, MCAT, Internships, Applications)

Jack

Harm OCD

Superstitious, repeating compulsions

Loss of friends, withdrawal from school

Great progress with ERP, but then -- college

Preparations:

- Anticipated obstacles
- Independent exposures
- Exposures on/near colleges and related activities
- Exposures on campus ahead of time
- Established accommodations ahead of time
- Therapy for maintenance and relapse prevention

Jessie

- 18 year old female
- Harm OCD and perfectionism
 - Intrusive thoughts: “What if I kill someone?” Images of hurting others
 - Compulsions: Rewriting, reshowering, driving rituals
 - Avoidance behaviors: driving, writing, typing, attending class
 - Consequences: unable to perform well in school
- Treatment plan
 - Leave of absence
 - Focus on treatment
 - Prior to returning to campus
 - Exposures on campus, spend night on campus
 - Drive to and from campus independently
 - Practice attending local college classes

Katy

18 yo

- OCD, perfectionism, depression
 - Excessive time studying
 - Procrastination & Avoidance
 - Isolation
- Considerations
 - Health issues
 - Attending university away from home/doctors
- On Campus Challenges
 - Virtual classes at the start of COVID
 - Completing the accommodations process
 - Time/room for exposures with a roommate

What are my options?

Break-Out Small Groups

Resources

- <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/Young-Adults/Mental-Health-in-College>
- <https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/ocd-and-transitions/>
- <https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/going-away-college-can-lead-uptick-ocd-distress>
- <https://www.treatmyocd.com/blog/managing-ocd-in-college>