

THE IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY (IACP) PROVIDE ADVICE TO
YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS TRANSITIONING FROM SECOND LEVEL TO THIRD LEVEL
EDUCATION

Counsellors provide parents and new college students moving away from home advice on coping with the feelings they may face in this time

The transition from secondary school to college and leaving home for the first time can be an exciting transition in a young person's life. Though many may relish the thought of moving away from home, it can be a daunting experience for many young people. For the first time in many young peoples' lives they will have to become wholly responsible for their own wellbeing. They will have to become accustomed to paying bills, sorting their own transport and possibly even waking themselves up in the morning. Many first-time college students will also have the added shock of losing the support networks of friends and peers that they built over 5/6 years in their second level education. Added to this, is a culture shock of a new city/country and campus living.

The IACP offers some practical advice for parents and young people who may be anxious about their upcoming attendance in college. IACP Vice-Chair Bernie Hackett says, "This is a time of great change in young people and their parents' lives, it is incredibly common for people to experience feelings of anxiety and low moods, just know that there are many positive and proactive steps they can take to deal with these feelings".

Parents can often feel anxious at this time, many fear their children leaving home and for the lack of supervision of they have over their safety. "It's important to show your child that you trust them. It's a normal reaction to be concerned but you must put your faith in your child that they can provide for themselves". Ms Hackett would encourage parents to prepare their children for their new life by having frank and honest discussions about these future changes. "Discussing with your child their new duties and responsibilities can go a long way to calming your own personal fears"

The first week away from home may be an exhilarating experience for many people, but many may find it lonely. Many young people will not realise that they are not alone in their feelings. Hackett advises young people to go out and try to meet their new peers. "Try to join any clubs and societies that you are interested in - you'd be surprised to find the how quickly you can build a new support network."

The IACP also would like to make parents and new students aware of the counselling services that are available in Irish colleges. "Almost every third level institution has a student counselling service - many of these services are staffed by IACP members – if you are feeling particularly overwhelmed or stressed these services can provide an empathetic ear in a confidential and safe environment", Hackett concludes.

For parents who are struggling with their own feelings at this time, the IACP would like to make them aware of www.iacp.ie where they can find a counsellor in their area that can work in a variety of disciplines.

Key IACP Tips for College Starters:

- Seek out new support networks in clubs and societies and student mixers;

- Limit alcohol use and avoid drugs, these can cloud your thinking and affect your emotions;
- Seek out counselling if you feel that the period of transition is too overwhelming;
- Parents dealing with anxiety over their children are encouraged to seek out a counsellor too;
- Be mindful that you are not alone, thousands of people are in the same position as you;
- These can be the best years of your life, so take the time to enjoy them.

Ends

Notes to Editor: Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Established in 1981, the IACP identify, develop and maintain professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy. The IACP aim to protect the public by promoting best practice and the professional development of its members. IACP is the largest professional body of counsellors and psychotherapists in the Republic of Ireland with over 4,200 members nationwide. IACP provide a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor/psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).

Bernie Hackett:

Bernie is a counsellor/psychotherapist and has been a member of IACP since 1991. Bernie currently serves on the Board of Directors as Vice Chair and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Board.

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