



Thanksgiving: Don't be a Turkey

Tips For Going Home For The Holidays

The first Thanksgiving home after going to school can be a milestone event. During this break, parents are looking forward to spending time with their kids, having meals as a family, and hearing all about their first couple of months of college. Meanwhile, the students are looking forward to having a car again, sleeping in late, and hanging out with their high school friends. Expectations of both parties can be high but remember that vacations are a time to relax and re-connect. Both parents and students can have a fulfilling break by limiting unrealistic expectations and respecting each other's needs. Here are some helpful suggestions for both parents and students to make Thanksgiving break less challenging.

Suggestions for Students

Remember that since you left for school, your parents have been missing you and looking forward to having you home for Thanksgiving break. They may have been planning for the holiday for weeks. They would want to spend time with you after months of being apart and catch up with your life. Younger siblings may have been anxiously waiting for your return to hear all your college stories. Here are a few suggestions to help make the holiday weekend more enjoyable.

1. Plan ahead and discuss with your family in advance what your plans are for the weekend. When making your plans, remember to keep lots of time for family so that they don't feel hurt or rejected by you.
2. Don't leave too much homework to be completed over the Thanksgiving holiday. Time has a tendency to fly when you're home with family and old friends.
3. Spend some alone time with your younger siblings and get to know what is going on in their lives. It can even be a 10 minute walk around the block after dinner, but can feel very special for younger siblings.
4. You are returning home as an adult. Show off how much you have grown by picking up after yourself, helping around the house, and cooking a meal you learned to make while at school.
5. Remember that your friends have been having varied experiences and have grown as a result. They may therefore seem different to you and it may take some time to reconnect with them.
6. Be sure to respect your parent's property and house rules. Show off your new-found maturity by taking extra care if using your parent's car (maybe even filling the gas tank without being asked) and call and let them know if you're running late.

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Suggestions for Parents

Don't be disappointed if your kids don't seem as excited as you about the holiday. It's not that they are not happy to see you but they might need some time to rest and sleep after studying for midterms and working late nights on projects. Also, remember that while your excitement is centered on seeing your son/daughter again, they are looking forward to seeing their old friends, having their own room again, and driving a car in addition to seeing you. While you have been figuring out how to deal with your empty nest, your kids have been living as adults for the past couple of months and they would want their new independence to be respected when they return home. Here are some recommendations to make the transition less stressful for the whole family.

1. Talk to your son/daughter about their plans for the break. Asking them about their plans lets them know that you respect their time and other commitments.
2. If you are planning on picking your son/daughter up from school, plan on spending more time there than anticipated. They may not be packed when you arrive and may need to say goodbyes to a few friends or drop some things off at various places. Getting upset about not being ready on time, criticizing their packing skills, or commenting on the large bag of dirty laundry they are bring along is not the best way to start the holiday weekend.
3. Do not criticize their appearance. No need to comment on their new hair style, facial zits, or weight loss/gain. Instead say positive things such as, "I like your new sweater" or "It's great to have you home again". It may take all your will power to not say anything about their new tattoo or body piercing but hold your tongue for a day or two and then gently ask them about it by saying something like "what was it like to get that piercing?" or "how did you select that tattoo".
4. Give them a chance to rest (whether that's sleeping on the car ride home with you or heading straight to their room when they get home) before delving into any deep discussions or family time.
5. Get them to open up slowly. Ask open ended questions such as "what is your roommate like?" or "what is it like living in Seattle?"
6. Do not assume that your son/daughter will be available the whole weekend. If there are family commitments, discuss them ahead of time and leave plenty of time for them to socialize with their friends.
7. Be gentle when asking about grades. Remember that they may have just received their grades for their first college midterms. Give them a chance to adjust their study styles to meet the new academic demands. Rather than voicing your disapproval, offer support such as, "College tests can be really different from high school. How can I help you meet your goals?"
8. On the matter of curfews, remember that for the past couple of months, your son/daughter has been living as an independent adult, deciding for him/herself when to socialize, when to come home, and when to study. So rather than arguing over the curfew, ask him/her what time he/she expects to be home and to call/text if they are running late.
9. If you really want to score points, give them a care package to take back with them. Some cookies, frozen food, or movie passes are always a good idea.

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