



## BrightFuture

### Local program helps youth with checkered pasts

Since 1973, the Jacksonville Marine Institute has worked to give troubled kids a renewed sense of community unavailable in the conventional incarceration system. The organization recently merged with national non-profit **AMIKids** to operate as a juvenile justice and alternative education programs. "The institute provides educational curriculum and behavior modification programs for kids who can't even attend school," says Alan Learch, chairman of the organization's board of trustees. "We want to give them the best shot we can to be successful in life." The group offers a variety of services to Duval County youth, including education, counseling, community service opportunities, and extracurricular activities—from spending time at nursing homes to whitewater rafting. So far, the organization's unconventional methods seem to be working. Learch says the group's success rate is approximately 80 percent. A newly renovated AMIKids facility will be opening on Beach Boulevard within the year and will provide space for the increasing number of children and staff members involved in the organization. [amikidsjacksonville.org](http://amikidsjacksonville.org) \*

BY RACHEL CUCCURULLO

**MUSICAL CHAIRS:** Think a seat at the symphony is a little too fancy or expensive for the kids? Think again. The **Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra** is offering its Sound Check card to students aged 25 and under, for \$25. With the purchase of one card, students have access to every Masterworks and Coffee Series concert during the 2013-14 season (20 performances in all). The card also allows up to two guests to purchase accompanying admissions for \$10 each (cash only); so parents, friends and family members can enjoy a night out, too. [jaxsymphony.org](http://jaxsymphony.org). \*



BY RACHEL CUCCURULLO

# SMOOTH TRANSITION

IS YOUR CHILD EMOTIONALLY PREPARED FOR COLLEGE? BY LAURA HAMPTON

**C**hange can be difficult at any stage in life, but few changes are as exciting and turbulent as the transition from adolescence to adulthood. As teens prepare to leave home and go off to college, they are still honing skills that will help them navigate through their freshman year—such as time management, stress management and problem solving.

While it's impossible to completely prepare your child emotionally for this transition, there are some steps parents can take to ensure their teens are up for the challenge.

In terms of development, young adults between the ages of 17 and 21 are focusing on intimacy, identity and independence. Kristen Alberts, a licensed psychologist and director of student counseling at Jacksonville University, refers to this stage as the "Three I's."

"Because the Three I's Phase is a self-focused period of time, I jokingly tell parents, 'It's all about them.'"

When working on intimacy, young adults are trying to develop and maintain meaningful relationships. Developing identity means teens are exploring their interests, values and strengths; developing independence means they're learning to solve problems and manage situations on their own.

The further along teens are in these developmental stages, the smoother the transition into college.

Though the process of preparing a child for college starts in childhood, parents should encourage independence and self-reliance in their children during the high school years. This means allowing teens to navigate their own conflicts, solve their own problems and, perhaps most importantly, fail.

Steve Soud, Director of College Counseling at The Bolles School, says parents naturally want to rush in and save their children, but this tendency can stifle the child's development. "That's a big challenge of parenting in adolescent years. You have to let your kids fail sometimes."





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The more teens are insulated from failure, the harder it will be when failure ultimately comes. Allowing your kids to fail helps them handle disappointment, learn from their mistakes, bounce back emotionally and think of creative solutions.

Freshmen will likely need to develop some stress management skills. Katrina Coakley, Director of Academic Advising at Jacksonville University, says stress is, by far, the most common reason students visit the counseling center. "The transition between high school and college—it's a huge difference."

Everything in a young adult's life changes when he or she goes off to college. Leaving a comfortable environment, where a child has clearly defined roles and a well-established support system, means making new friends, handling new responsibilities and coping with academic pressures.

"It's leaving the nest, and leaving the nest is stressful," Soud says.

Though most young adults are resilient and handle change relatively easily, some may struggle.

Alberts says looking at past experiences with adjustment—such as going away to summer camp or changing schools—will help parents gauge how their teen is handling the transition into college.

"If your child is normally outgoing and engaging and handles these situations easily, and all of a sudden he's in his room and not coming out, those would be signs that things are not going as well as they have in the past."

In addition to changes in their social environment, college freshmen have to learn how to manage their time differently. In college, students take on bigger projects that may require a semester to complete, as opposed to working through several chapters of a textbook and immediately testing on them, which is standard in most high schools.

Unlike high school, however, no one is standing over a college freshman telling him or her to study. Though there is no way for parents to know if their child is studying enough or even attending class (until the report card comes, that is), Alberts says the best way to ensure students are doing the work is by having conversations in the year prior to college about expectations. The discussions should include expectations regarding finances and academics as well as alcohol and drugs.

Albert says the worst thing parents can do is step in and try to control the situation.

"Parents should not call professors; that never goes over very well. And don't walk your child to class," Alberts adds.

Here's where parents may go through a little adjustment period themselves. At some point, you have to trust that you've done all you can to prepare your child for what lies ahead—in the next four years and beyond. \*