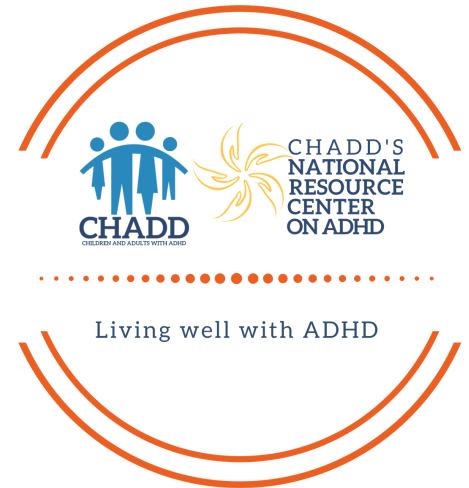


# ASK THE EXPERT



## Is My High School Student Ready for College? (And is My College Student Ready to Go Back?)



**Ari Tuckman, PsyD, MBA**

## College Can Be Disastrous

- Students who made it through HS with lots of assistance may bomb out when all that structure disappears in college.
  - College is the most tempting and distracting place in the world.
- Many of these students wind up back at home.
  - Live at home and work and/or take classes.
  - So sometimes a preemptive gap year is better.

## Set the Expectations

- Talk to your teen about specifically what you need to see to feel confident that they are ready for college.
  - Focus on what matters the most.
  - Create concrete requirements for greater freedom.
- Start early, then review progress occasionally.

## Focus on Process, Not Just Outcome

- A good process scales up well for the greater demands of college.
  - A bad one is more likely to break down—and more dependent on too many stars aligning.
- Applies to daily tasks, but also to the application process, SATs, etc.
  - The college application process may be predictive of their college performance.

## Lifestyle Sets the Foundation

- Many teens with ADHD have terrible lifestyle habits that decrease their functioning.
  - Sleep, diet, exercise, stress, manageable substance use, media use, balance of work and play, etc.
- Makes a bad situation worse.
  - Cognitively, emotionally, psychologically, socially.
- So lifestyle is a major point of intervention.

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## Foster Understanding

- Many resist interventions because they don't understand how ADHD is impacting them.
- It's important for the teen to understand how their ADHD impacts their performance.
  - Until mid/late twenties, they often underestimate the impact.
  - Focus on specific examples and patterns.
- Identifying the causes of problems gives them more control over future outcomes.

## Active Problem-Solving

- Ability to go beyond standard procedures to solve problems:
  - Recognize there is a problem
  - Ask questions in class
  - Contact teacher
  - Seek tutoring, etc.
  - Put in extra effort
- This is a crucial skill!

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## Highly Effective, But Under-Used

- College students are notorious for not taking their medication.
  - Despite it being a major contributor to them getting into college.
  - Some don't see the need; some don't like the idea.
- But it's often a cornerstone of success.
- Don't give away your meds!

## College Alternatives: Before/During

- A planned gap year beats a forced one.
- There are official gap year programs that can be great (and expensive).
- Combination of working, volunteering, and/or classes while living at home.
  - Create a stepped transition from HS to college.
  - Give more freedom and responsibility—and focus on a self-directed good process.

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## Additional Resources

- Transitioning to College
  - CPAMM (Coalition to Prevent ADHD Medication Misuse) <http://www.cpamm.org/>
  - The Jed Foundation, Set to Go Program <https://www.settogo.org/>
- Gap Years
  - General information
    - <http://www.americangap.org/>
    - <https://www.teenlife.com/category/gap-year/>
    - <https://www.studyabroad101.com/countries/gap-year-abroad>

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**Talk with an ADHD Information Specialist**  
**1-866-200-8098, Monday-Friday, 1-5 pm ET**