

Life Beyond UTS Parent Talk: Key Takeaways

On May 5th, 2022, UTSPA Wellness, in collaboration with UTS Social Work & Nursing, invited parents of S5/S6 students to join a conversation about *Life Beyond UTS*. We are grateful for the meaningful discussions that took place following the stories and experiences shared by our guest speakers, parents of UTS alumni. Based on the conversations in the breakout rooms and questions asked, we would like to share a few key takeaways that will be helpful in supporting your child through change and transition.

1. Listen and trust your child

Preparing and navigating this time includes many important decisions. Listening to the needs of your child, having confidence and trusting them to make decisions is important. They have been well prepared during their time at UTS to make informed choices as they transition into adulthood. Though it can be challenging, allowing space to make these decisions, and offering opportunities to hold conversations, is important. Listening to understand and commending their abilities as they make this transition is helpful.

2. Support your child

While trusting your child to make their own decisions is essential, it is important to support your child's needs as they prepare for change. This includes encouraging the importance of wellbeing; parents shared that support involved ensuring their child was getting proper sleep and maintaining healthy eating habits. Students shared they would like parent support in navigating common life skills such as cooking, budgeting, and completing taxes. Inviting questions and curiosities is a supportive way to promote conversations about what your child may be wondering or need from you.

3. Take a step back

It is likely that as students transition to life beyond UTS, they will become more independent. This involves parents pausing to acknowledge your child's skills, and taking a step back. This will look different for each family, and to support your child's journey towards adulthood, it is important to discuss *how* providing such space will be beneficial for everyone. For example, discussing communication expectations. Follow their lead and let them be in control of coming to you when needed. Parents shared that even though this can seem counterintuitive at times, your child will start to engage and seek support from you on their own terms.

4. Encourage Connection

Whether it be with family, friends, adults, a common suggestion expressed was to encourage your child to stay in touch and maintain meaningful connections. Particularly during times of a pandemic, existing relationships help make transitions (from UTS, to new schools, new locations) more manageable. Consider your communication and relationship now, how can you co-create expectations with your child to ensure both of your communication needs are met? Direct and intentional conversations around this will be helpful.

*For any further thoughts or questions, please connect with UTS Social Workers, Steph or Joelle.
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