

Fear vs. Faith

STUDENTS

EXPERIENCE

College courses more difficult than expected; instructor expectations not clear or unfamiliar.

Changes in relationships with family and high school friends. Feelings of anonymity, loneliness, and lack of personal recognition/affirmation from others.

Exposure to new and unfamiliar life styles, value systems and ideologies.

Competing demands for time and energy from work, family, friends, and social activities.

Challenge of finding meaning among an overwhelming array of potential personal choices.

“FEAR” RESPONSE

Fear of Failure. Fear of losing respect of family, friends. Procrastination. Distraction from study. Concentration on social, recreational activities.

Inappropriate attempts to become well known and “popular.” Emphasis on needs and expectations of others while sacrificing your own needs and aspirations. Becomes a “people pleaser.” Inconsistent beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Fear of rejection by new friends leads to student accepting of others’ values without due consideration. Fear of rejection by family leads to distancing, lack of communication, and preemptive rebellion.

Attempts to be “all things to all people.” Sacrifice of time for personal renewal. As feelings of being overwhelmed increase, may adopt compulsive or obsessive behaviors. May also seek escape from demands through addictive behaviors.

Makes impulsive choices about life goals, career, academic major, courses, campus involvement, relationships, etc. to alleviate feelings of confusion and lack of direction. Follows advice and directions of others without question or consideration.

“FAITH” RESPONSE

Trust in previous successes. Confidence in personal learning strategies and methods that have worked well before. Willingness to ask questions and seek clarification and information.

Faith in own worth as a person and as a friend. Focus on discovery of appropriate personal contribution to new academic and social environments. Sensitivity and empathy toward others who share similar feelings.

Trust in own ability to examine alternatives without sacrificing personal beliefs and values. Consideration of learned beliefs, values and life styles from a perspective of self-awareness and personal goals.

Confidence in ability to set reasonable priorities and manage time and energy effectively. Assertive responses to others’ demands, and realistic perspective of own ability to comply with expectations. Focus on progress rather than perfection.

Aware of own growth. Perceives own experiences and those of others as decision-making resources. Learns from others, including personal role models and heroes. Considers advice from perspective of relevance to personal aspirations. Often perceives life and learning as an “adventure.”

PARENTS

EXPERIENCE

Sense that student's academic performance in college is below that displayed in high school, or below parent's perception of student's "potential."

Realization that son/daughter is becoming more independent and less available for parental direction and supervision.

Awareness that student is experiencing alternatives to traditional family values and life style.

Apparently decreased willingness of student to spend time with family or participate in family business or social activities.

Realization that student's choices, and the personal direction they represent, disagree or directly conflict with parental wishes.

"FEAR RESPONSE"

Fear that student's performance will reflect poorly on family. Attempts to "motivate" student through manipulation, guilt induction, bribery or intimidation.

Parent attempts to re-establish dependence and control by demanding return to childhood relationships as a substitute for development of adult friendships. Increased parental demands for time and attention. May also involve creation of parental dependence on student.

Fear that parental training will be compromised or abandoned. Attempts to assess value of family teachings, perhaps through condemnation of alternatives. Adoption of conservative, sometimes discriminatory, view of other cultures, life styles.

Fear that family structure may be compromised. Feelings of being unable to compete effectively for student's attention. Strong and repeated reminders about student's family responsibilities and obligations. Retraction of support for student's college education.

Parent fear that their (subconscious) desire to realize success through their children's accomplishments is at risk. Attempt's to "fix" student's "problem" by aggressive reassertion of control. Manipulation, ridicule, abandonment of student.

"FAITH" RESPONSE

Trust in the value and worth of student as a person. Ability to distinguish "who you are" from "what you do" (exams, grades, etc.) Encouragement for student to risk possible failure as part of self-discovery process.

Support for student's ability to establish relationships in college environment. Expression of caring, non-manipulative interest in student's growth. Willingness to listen openly to student's sharing of positive/negative experiences without giving advice, directions, attempting to "fix" the problem or promoting "victim" orientation.

Trust that years of childhood training will stand up to rational and emotional scrutiny. Confidence that student will make responsible decisions. Willingness to discuss alternative viewpoints without anger or defensiveness.

Confidence in student's ability to determine personal priorities. Acceptance of student's decisions from respect for independence. Willingness to assist in generating more time for student's education and college experience.

Trust that son/daughter can discover personal meaning and direction most appropriate for them. Respect for student as a unique person different than his/her parents. Communication of parent's own search for direction.