

The Communication Reset Plan

A tool for recalibrating how you stay connected without pushing your student away.

The goal is not to stay close. It is to raise a person who wants to stay close. This plan helps you shift from contact that relieves your anxiety to contact that builds your relationship.

Section 1: Frequency Guide by Student Type

Students fall into three communication patterns in the first year. Find your student and adjust.

THE ANXIOUS STUDENT

SIGNS

Contacts home frequently, sometimes multiple times a day. Seeks reassurance after difficult moments. May call upset and then be fine an hour later.

WHAT IS HAPPENING

They are building a coping toolkit and still relying on you as a primary resource. That is normal and temporary.

YOUR APPROACH

- Pick up when they call. Do not let it go to voicemail.
- Keep calls short and grounding, not problem-solving sessions. Ask "What do you need right now?" not "Here is what you should do."
- After two to three weeks of frequent contact, gently name it: "I love that we talk so much. I also want to make sure you are building support there too. Who else have you talked to this week?"
- Gradually introduce the idea of a scheduled call so contact becomes predictable for both of you.

THE AVOIDANT STUDENT

SIGNS

Goes quiet quickly. Replies are short or delayed. Cancels calls more than initiates them. May say "I'm fine" to close the conversation.

WHAT IS HAPPENING

Often identity formation, not rejection. Students who are intensely engaged in building their own world sometimes simply do not think to check in. This is not a sign you have lost them.

YOUR APPROACH

- Reduce outgoing contact. One check-in per week is enough.
- Send low-pressure messages that do not require a response (see Section 2).
- If silence extends past 72 hours with no reply on any platform, that is a different signal. See the Red Flags guide below.
- When they do reach out, let them lead the conversation.

THE OPEN STUDENT

SIGNS

Communicates naturally and inconsistently. Texts when something funny happens. Calls when something hard happens. Does not follow a pattern.

WHAT IS HAPPENING

This is the goal state. They have some independence and some connection. They are not performing either.

YOUR APPROACH

- Match their energy. Do not formalize what is organic.
- Keep a weekly touchpoint (a text, a meme, a short call) without requiring one back.
- Celebrate small moments they share. The less you interrogate, the more they will share.

Section 2: The 5 Texts Students Actually Want to Receive

Field-tested with real college students. These communicate love without requiring a response.

1 THE NO-STRINGS CHECK-IN

"Thinking about you today, no reason. Hope it is a good one. Nothing you need to respond to."

2 THE CONFIDENCE SENDER (FOR A HARD WEEK)

"I know this week is a lot. You have got this in ways you probably do not feel right now. Go be excellent. I will be here when things"

settle."

3 THE HOME ANCHOR

"Making your favorite dinner Sunday. No agenda. Just excited to see you when you are next home."

4 THE DOOR IS OPEN TEXT

"There is nothing you can tell me that I cannot handle. You do not have to have it figured out before you reach out. Just so you know."

5 THE PROUD PARENT (USE SPARINGLY -- LANDS HARDER WHEN IT IS NOT CONSTANT)

"I was just thinking about how far you have come. Proud is not big enough but it is the word I have got. That is it, carry on."

Section 3: The 3 Check-In Questions That Never Feel Like Interrogation

Replace "how are classes going?" and "are you eating?" with these.

"What is one thing that surprised you this week?"

WHY IT WORKS

Forward-looking, open-ended, does not presume problems. The answer tells you a lot about their emotional state without asking directly.

"Is there anything you are figuring out that you would want a second opinion on?"

WHY IT WORKS

It positions you as an available resource without implying they need rescuing. It gives them permission to bring you a hard thing without it automatically becoming your problem to solve.

"What are you actually looking forward to in the next week or two?"

WHY IT WORKS

Gets them thinking ahead rather than reviewing the past. Most campus counselors agree that students with things to look forward to are doing better than those who cannot name any. This question surfaces that information without asking "are you okay?"

Print and Keep

THE 72-HOUR RULE

If your student has not responded to any platform (text, call, email, social) for more than 72 hours, this is not a communication preference question. Contact the RA, campus wellness, or campus police non-emergency line. Do not wait for another day.

SIGNAL	WHAT TO DO
Less frequent contact than before	Reduce outgoing frequency. This is usually fine.
Short replies, less detail	Keep messages brief and warm. One question at a time.
Misses a planned call	Text once to reschedule. Do not stack attempts.
Silent 72+ hours across all platforms	Contact RA or campus wellness. This is a safety question, not a preference question.
Sudden increase in calls	Pick up. Ask "What do you need right now?" Listen.

SIGNAL	WHAT TO DO
Asks to communicate through a third party	Family therapist with emerging adult experience.