

Taking the worry out of college admissions

It's ironic that I'm tackling the subject of worry. You see, I'm no stranger to worry. I'm afraid of roller coasters flying off tracks, cable cars slamming into mountains, and planes hitting wind shear, even when I'm on the ground. I feel a shot of adrenaline when I merge in traffic or move through an intersection. I'm freaked when a chipmunk darts across my path. I'll take a black cat any day. I'm not superstitious. Just a little jumpy. Maybe that's why I'm writing about worry. Because I know what it feels like.

College admissions is fraught with worry. Parents worry they don't know enough about the process. They worry they haven't done enough for their child. They worry their child hasn't worked hard enough, or if they have,

that they'll still blend into the sea of applicants. Parents worry their child's school counselor is pulled in too many directions, or their teachers won't write standout recommendations, or their coaches won't go to bat. Parents worry about rejections and regrets —

the what nows and what ifs. Then there's the price. Phew, that's a lot of worrying.

I don't worry about college admissions and neither should you. Here's why — besides how to pay for it, there's not much to worry about.

#1 Don't worry that you don't know enough

You know plenty, and the rest you'll figure out. There's a way to navigate the college-admissions labyrinth without getting lost.

CommonApp.org keeps it simple.



Maureen C. Scudder is an independent college counselor specializing in essay advising. She also works as a master writing advisor for MedSchoolCoach and as an adjunct professor of English and Communications. To learn more about her college counseling services, visit maureencscudder.com.

They streamline the application process with a user-friendly platform, and they provide resources to answer frequently-asked questions. Start with their simple introductory video.

Some of you will shriek, "But what about Georgetown?! How about MIT?! What about the UCs?!" (University of California system. See, there's a simple answer to your question.) You're right — not all schools accept the Common App, but more than 900 do, so find out who does and who doesn't, and apply accordingly. That's all. There's no need to worry.

CollegeBoard.org is also helpful. You might be interested in the Coalition for College Access. You will be interested in FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Just keep your searches simple.

When you get deeper into the process, sift through the barrage of information, and attend to what's salient. Otherwise, overwhelm will set in. Get your questions answered by the people who are making the decisions. Yes, ask for guidance from counselors but also return to primary sources. Most

likely that means Common App, College Board, FAFSA, and admissions representatives at schools on your child's list. Yes, they have an agenda. They also have answers.

College admissions is less complicated than you may think, and it's certainly not beyond you. So much of our success, in anything really, is about comfort and confidence. A simple, direct approach will help you maintain your foothold, a shield against the pundits and an antidote to the hysteria.

#2 Don't worry that you haven't done enough

If you're reading this article, you've done enough.

Honestly, what parent thinks they've done enough? I haven't met them. Parents worry they haven't prepared their child for college admissions. They worry they haven't given their child enough academic support, enough enrichment, enough opportunities, enough guidance. They worry they haven't set them up for life. Yikes.

It's time to let all that go. Trust

that your child can and will construct their own future. You will support them, but you are not the one going to college. You've done enough to get them there.

#3 Don't worry that your child hasn't done enough

Maybe they haven't done enough, but they are enough. The college admissions process has a way of making people feel they aren't good enough, whatever that means. Forget done-enoughs and good-enoughs, and commit to the belief that every child, with all their strengths and weaknesses, is enough. Maybe they haven't accomplished great things yet, but maybe they will. Stop worrying about the past and reframe the conversation with eyes on the future.

#4 Don't worry that school counselors, teachers, and coaches aren't doing enough

School personnel are stretched thin. Anyone who claims otherwise isn't paying attention to the world of education. But counselors, teachers, and coaches continue to connect with

their students — your children — every day. They care about kids, they know their areas of expertise, and they are students of their craft. They are also works in progress. That's a benefit, not a drawback. Students don't expect the adults at school to be perfect. Their parents shouldn't either.

Take a team approach. When you bring your child to the hospital, you expect a team to collaborate and provide the best care. You trust your child's private violin teacher, but you also want your child in the orchestra. Think team. The adults at your child's school are members of a team, a symphony. When one misses a note, another is there to move the music forward.

Remember, your child is the captain of their team. Help them learn how to advocate for themselves. Help them understand that they're responsible for building relationships with the adults at school who are working on their behalf.

#5 Accept rejections but not regrets

Students applying to competitive colleges will almost certainly face some rejection. And whether or not this is their first time facing rejection, it will burn.

Feeling rejected is awful, but getting rejected isn't awful. Getting rejected means the next best thing is waiting. But feeling rejected is agonizing. Don't minimize it. Our work as adults is to empathize and to help our children cope with rejection and manage their hurt.

So, Parents, work with your children so they can accept rejection — not absorb it nor repel it, just accept it. Parents should also help their child prepare for it. Don't worry about it, but do explain that rejection is part of life, and explain it long before college rejection letters arrive.

Accepting rejection doesn't mean accepting regret. To avoid regret, your child needs to take the process seriously, start early, and build the best applications possible. Help your child put in the time, go all out, shoot high, while being realistic and practical.

When applicants know they've given the process their best, they rarely feel regret.

#6 Understand that conquering worry is hard work

Our job as adults is to not pass our worries onto our children. Our job is to validate, empower, and affirm them. Be honest and supportive. Help your child understand they are the main character in their life, the star of their show. When they fully embrace their power, there's not much to worry about. Worry comes when we feel things are out of our control. Help them take control.

#7 Stamp out worry by showing support

Give your child the support they need. Parents take their child to the pediatrician because they need individualized care. They hire a private violin teacher so their child gets better at violin. They find a tutor or therapist or coach because everyone benefits from one-on-one support. This strategy reduces worry; it doesn't add to it. Dial



down worry rather than ratchet it up. Why? Because stirring up worry isn't good for anyone or anything.

As a college counselor, I'm part of the team that supports a student through the college-admissions process. I don't want my teammates worrying, not about college admissions and not about getting struck by lightning.

Unless, of course, it's really close. **VL**

Maureen C. Scudder is an independent college counselor specializing in essay advising. From strategy to submission, she guides clients through the college application process.

Visit maureencscudder.com to learn more.



Find story at https://view.publitas.com/p222-6222/valley_20220501_a/page/20-21

