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A Tale of Three Daughters and College Admissions

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final transcripts to be certain no courses were dropped and grades did not plummet, as well as to check for evidence of disciplinary action.

If something does change for the better (like a scholarship is awarded) or for the worse (like a drop in grades due to illness), be proactive and communicate the news directly to the colleges with an explanation (no whining please).

Don't hold your breath until the colleges make their decisions. Identify the Regional Admissions Officer who is responsible for applications from your area. E-mail or call to reinforce that the school is your top choice (or one of your top choices). Ask if your application is complete or visit the site the college directs you to and check for yourself. Participate in on-line chats if the school website affords this possibility. Check social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) for groups of students at the college or applicants and join in the discussion.

Don't wait for the responses to visit these campuses. The decision deadline, May 1st, arrives soon after admission decisions-so be prepared. If academic or financial concerns make visiting impossible, continue to familiarize yourself with colleges in other ways. Read blogs, examine course catalogues, review housing considerations, email faculty, students and undergraduate admission counselors in order to make comparisons that will help you make an informed decision.

Because of my three daughters and the nearly 300 clients I have served, I can tell you first hand that life does not begin with an

A number of years ago my oldest daughter was thrilled to get accepted to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo campus. After two years of study, she decided veterinary school was not in her future. She tried to change her major, but changing your major at Cal Poly is nightmarish, to say the least. If you are not 100% committed to your course of study (and few teens are able to make such an important decision at 17 years of age), Cal Poly is not the right match. This daughter is now completing science classes at a community college to buttress her application to nursing schools.

Three years ago my second daughter was ecstatic to receive an acceptance letter from MIT. It was and remains her first choice school. Still, the program of study is so intellectually demanding that she sometimes wonders where the balance in her life has gone. Did she ever have true balance? Can anyone who is able to achieve at the level necessary to gain admission to such an academically rigorous university ever able to live life at a pace that one might call "relaxed"? Hardly.

Daughter number three is presently a senior in high school. Her college applications are all sent out. She worries about winning admission to the schools at the top of her list even though she has a GPA to die for and strong test scores.

Somehow the admission frenzy has managed to scare our kids-even those at the top of the academic ladder-into thinking that their chances of getting into college are slim and getting slimmer each year. Instead of indulging in needless worry and anxiety, there are some constructive things seniors in high school can do while they wait to learn what their final college options are:

First and foremost, relax and enjoy your senior year and last months living at home. Although it may seem as though you can't wait to live on your own, this final year is memorable and precious.

Continue to do your best academic work and maintain good standards of conduct in all areas of your life. According to the 2009 State of College Admission released by the National Association for College Admissions Counseling, 21 percent of colleges reported they revoked offers of admission. The number one reason for retraction was a drop in grades (65%) followed by disciplinary issues (35%) and falsification of application information (29%). Colleges review

acceptance letter from Stanford, nor does it end with a rejection letter from UC Berkeley. Change the names of the colleges to any others, and my message remains the same. It is important to have confidence in yourself. Research shows that 9 out of 10 students get into their first or second choice school. You will get through college admission and develop maturity and resilience as a result. Remember, your life is much bigger than an acceptance or rejection letter from a particular college.

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