

Transcript Season 2 Episode 10 : Coping with Stress from Graduating from College

Graduating from college is the result of hard work and sacrifice. Along with the feelings of accomplishment and pride, there is stress that needs to be managed. Stay tuned for some coping strategies that will assist college seniors anticipating graduation and recent college graduates in managing those stressors.

Podcast Opener:

Everyone needs some advice now and then. If you are getting ready to leave home or have been on your own for a while, Grown Up U: Facts for Success can give you trusted advice that can take the stress out of adulthood. Listen and find some answers to the questions being constantly bombarded at you.

Podcast Script:

Alison Crane: Hello, everyone. I'm Alison Crane, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent with the Garland County Extension Service in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

And I'm pleased to welcome our guest for this episode, my son, Jonathan Crane. Jonathan has just finished his senior year of classes and finals this week and has been working toward a degree in business. He is finishing a year early, a newlywed, and is graduating with high honors, so he has a lot of experience in what we are going to talk about today.

Jonathan, thank you for joining us today.

Jonathan Crane: Thank you for asking me. It's good to be here.

Alison Crane: Today's topic is coping strategies for managing stress associated with college graduation. Graduation is a change that can evoke mixed emotions. Change, whether we consider it good or bad, causes stress. Why do you think graduating from college is stressful?

Jonathan Crane: I think it really depends on the person. This is definitely a huge transition time in a any college graduate's life. If a person has planned well, kept up with everything, and has a job lined up then it's not quite as stressful. For the person who is scrambling to make sure all requirements have been met and is unsure what to do next.

Alison Crane: Yes, many graduates feel generally anxious about the unknown future path. The endings and beginnings of life transitions are always a little scary and anxiety provoking. The sense of a lack of control over one's life may contribute to higher levels of psychological distress.

Sometimes there is a feeling of being let down after the emotional intensity of working so hard to complete course work, or meet graduation requirements, and make all the preparations to finalize graduation plans.

What do you think are other factors contributing to stress in graduation?

Jonathan Crane: Financial stress is often a big factor for many graduating college students. Having enough money to buy graduation supplies or buying supplies for a new house along with the financial stress of paying for your degree. It all adds up to be very stressful.

Having a job lined up can make it not quite as stressful, because it can help you can start planning a budget. But for those that don't, there is the stress of finding a job.

For some there is the stress of where to live, what to do next, fear of failure to get a good job, and become self-supporting if not already doing so. Others may be dealing with the stress of getting into grad school if that is the direction they want to go. There is so much to think about and do that it can be very overwhelming.

Another thing to consider is if you are graduating then most likely you are taking upper level classes. The requirements and assignments for senior level class demand much more attention and skill than when you are starting out.

For me, I've been having to complete multiple papers, projects, and assignments every single week of these final semesters, sometimes even daily. And this is the final semester, so this really counts.

It's also requiring a lot of burning the midnight oil and staying up early in the morning whether it's 3, 4, or 5 in the morning even. And that takes a big toll on you sometimes. And it adds a lot of extra stress because you are tired on top of it, and you are worried about these assignments. Wondering if you are doing them right. And I've been working a job on top of that requires a lot of lifting and volunteering at my church. Needless to say, I am pretty tired.

Alison Crane: Yes, you have been giving careful thought to the stressors of graduating from college and I'm sure many college students/graduates can identify with those. There are pre-graduate stresses and post-graduate ones many of which overlap. There may be some other stressors, but let's consider some coping strategies now.

Of course, recognizing your own stressors in both pre and post-graduation are important in developing personal coping strategies. Remember you are not alone and it's very common and understandable that there is stress and some potential anxiety both in anticipating graduation from college, experiencing it, and being a post college graduate.

Any ideas and ways to cope with the stress?

Jonathan Crane: I found it really helpful just having a trusted friend group that I can go to and talk with. And we can go over anything that's stressing us. And it kinda makes it more down to earth, you know what I mean? It makes it where it doesn't feel as big as it once was.

And also, I always have my parents that I can talk to. And I mean, they've been through this too, so they know where I'm at. And others who have given me advice along the way whether it's from church and whether it's from people at MBSF. I've learned to ask for information rather than worry about it. It's better to ask than to just stress all the time. You know what I mean?

Alison Crane: Right.

Jonathan Crane: And many colleges have job placement services that can help with resume writing and other skills needed to secure employment. Some of my friends have been helpful in providing information and helping me to feel more comfortable in managing my moods and anxious moments.

I also have learned to stay on top of deadlines and keep a close check on my grades and graduation requirements. I've learned over the years that it is better to stay on top of it than to let it go by. It adds a lot of stress if you wait till the end.

Alison Crane: Uh, yes! You've definitely learned that the hard way, didn't you?

Jonathan Crane: I most definitely did!

I am also regularly checking for any additional class assignments and double checking that I haven't missed any.

If there is a requirement or something I'm not sure about, I ask, so no surprises at graduation.

Alison Crane: Those are good strategies and will also benefit you in any future job. Not all stress is negative.

Converting stress into positive change is accomplished through positive, problem-coping strategies. This can be done by analyzing the situation and using effective tools to plan and prepare for upcoming changes.

You want to take your time to understand your situation and plan a course of action – even when it seems unforeseeable. Try to understand change as a positive opportunity as opposed to a threatening one.

One thing for graduating seniors to remember is, you are not alone, and these mixed feelings are normal. However, if you become so anxious and depressed that normal functioning is

impaired, then discuss other options with your parents or your school advisor, like getting some counseling.

Anything you would like to add to coping strategies or our discussion?

Jonathan Crane: I think it's helpful to find some time for something fun and interesting, also exercise, and eating healthy. Getting plenty of rest. I know it's hard but it's really important even if you have to out on a couple deals to go to bed early. Sometimes I'm lacking right now especially as I'm finishing up my finals week and try to stay on top of requirements that I have. I mean, you have to have time to study.

Talking to someone who understands has helped me, too, and knowing it's ok to get stressed and then tell myself to calm down. You don't have to stress about it. Knowing others have gotten through it and I will too, is very beneficial to me.

I can't say, I have everything figured out for my future even after graduation but I'm working on it and I know where to go for good advice and support.

Alison Crane: Thank you for joining us for this podcast, Jonathan. Your dad and I are very proud of all that you have accomplished.

For Grown Up U, we wish all the rising College Seniors and those graduating soon or who have recently graduated the very best in their endeavors.

Remember that you can find more resources for stress management through your local county extension office. Contact them to find out what programs are being offered in your county.

Podcast Closer:

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