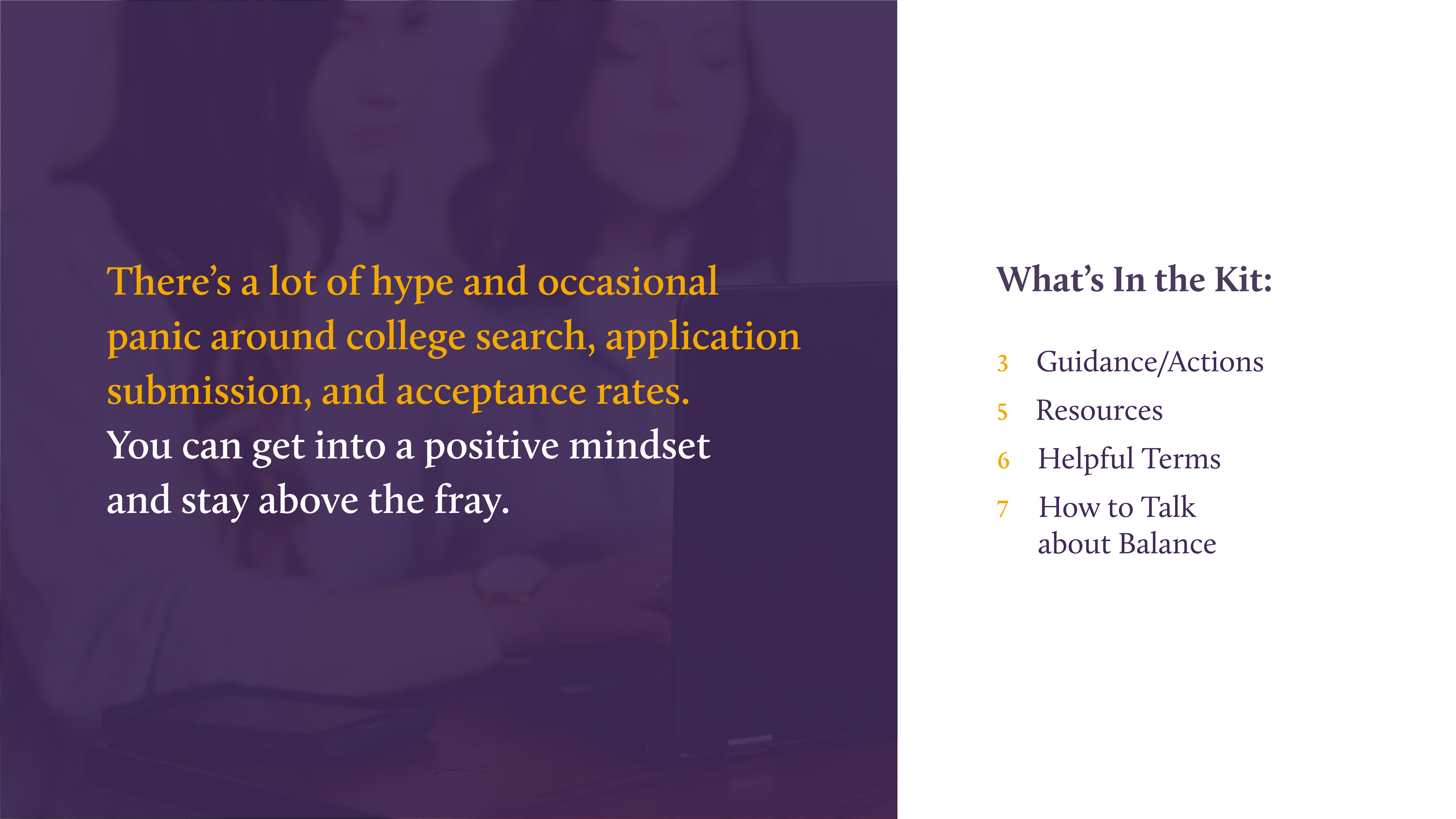




How to Manage Admissions Pressure: Let's Talk About College Fit and Family Stress

The background of the slide features a dark purple overlay on a photograph. The photograph shows a laptop in the foreground and two young women in the background, both smiling. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

There's a lot of hype and occasional panic around college search, application submission, and acceptance rates.

You can get into a positive mindset and stay above the fray.

What's In the Kit:

- 3 Guidance/Actions
- 5 Resources
- 6 Helpful Terms
- 7 How to Talk about Balance

Guidance

Going to college represents an exciting milestone for both students and parents. But the reality is that college isn't a final destination. Instead, it's a next step in a young person's development into adulthood. Alternative pathways, attending community college, or transferring to a different college after your first year are all normal and acceptable options.



Actions

Don't make the mistake of getting overly swayed by widely publicized college ranking lists. A highly ranked school won't guarantee quality or value for individual students. Prioritize your individual needs over college rank. The rankings are based on measures which may not matter to you.

Pay attention to *fit* first. The right fit means that that school will engage a student on many levels. If they are engaged, they are much more likely to succeed. Research shows that students who attend a college that is a good fit report positive outcomes from their college experience, including future job satisfaction and a sense of overall wellbeing.

Guidance

If you want to go to college, you have many options. There are 4,000+ colleges in the United States eager to enroll students. The national average acceptance rate for first-time students across all four-year institutions in the United States was 66.7% in Fall 2017, which means that most colleges accepted more than half of their applicants.



Actions

So-called "brand-name" schools are fine, but parents and students would be wise to broaden their perspective when it comes to the college search. Consider a wider range of colleges; you are likely to find many excellent options with generous acceptance rates. These campuses are filled with ambitious, intelligent, capable students.

It is normal to get denied admission to at least some of the colleges on your list. Remember that admissions, especially to those brand-name schools, is fickle. Many highly qualified applicants get turned away. Don't let this reality diminish your personal accomplishments or sense of worth.

Guidance

Stress surrounding the college application process is common but not inevitable. Here are recommendations for managing the stress.

Actions

Don't get overly caught up in peer conversations about college applications. If your friends are freaking out, you may decide to avoid the topic of college applications with them. Remember, you can also lean on your adult support system, such as mentors, a school counselor, trusted teachers, and family.

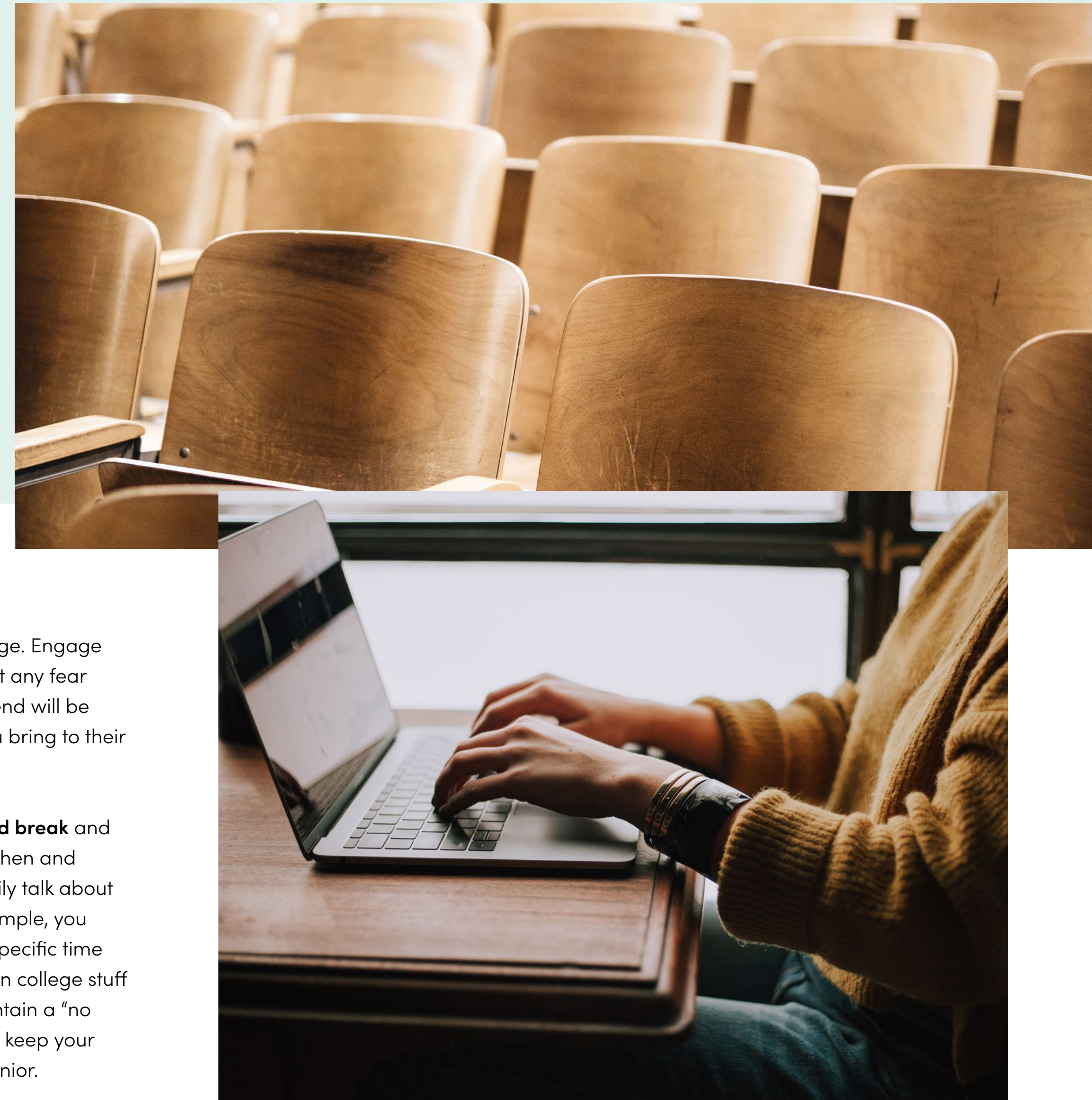
Stay grounded in reality: research shows that for the vast majority of students, where they attend college is not linked to how much money they will earn in the future, the types of jobs for which they will be hired, or how successful they will be later on in life.

When finalizing your college list, avoid placing just one dream school high up on a pedestal. Instead, have a balanced list of good options, including several "likelies." This means colleges that you like (where you can see a good fit) and where you are likely to be accepted.

Sit down and discuss with your family the very real possibility that you will be denied admission to some of the schools to which you apply. Separate emotion from fact: admissions is fickle and there are factors outside of your control that can determine your

chances at a particular college. Engage in positive self-talk to combat any fear of failure: the school you attend will be lucky to have you and all you bring to their campus.

Give yourself a well deserved break and create boundaries around when and how often you and your family talk about college applications. For example, you may decide to designate a specific time once a week to touch base on college stuff together and otherwise maintain a "no college talk" policy while you keep your "day job" as a high school senior.



Our goal is to empower you with the right resources at the right time. College Guidance Network has carefully curated this list for you:

UPCOMING COLLEGE GUIDANCE NETWORK PROGRAMS:

“First-Generation Students: Practical Tips for College Admissions”
Wednesday,
Nov. 11, 7–8 PM

“Navigating the New Normal of Optional Testing”
Wednesday,
Nov. 18, 7–8 PM

“Inside Admissions: How an Application is Reviewed”
Wednesday,
Dec. 02, 7–8 PM

“Navigating School During Uncertain Times”, a workshop brought to you by [Challenge Success](#).

How can parents best support the personal and academic needs of their children, while also attending to their own professional and family needs? In this presentation, caregivers will learn how they can establish a healthier home environment for their school-aged child, reduce academic stress without sacrificing achievement, and increase resilience, creativity, and well-being.

Thursday, November 10,
5 PM PT / 8PM ET | [Register here](#)

[Colleges That Change Lives](#)

CTCL is dedicated to the advancement and support of a student-centered college search process. Namely, they work to educate families that the criteria used by most college bound students and their counselors, such as name and prestige, do not acknowledge the importance of understanding an individual student’s needs and how they ‘fit’ with the mission and identity of an individual college community.

[Jed Foundation](#)

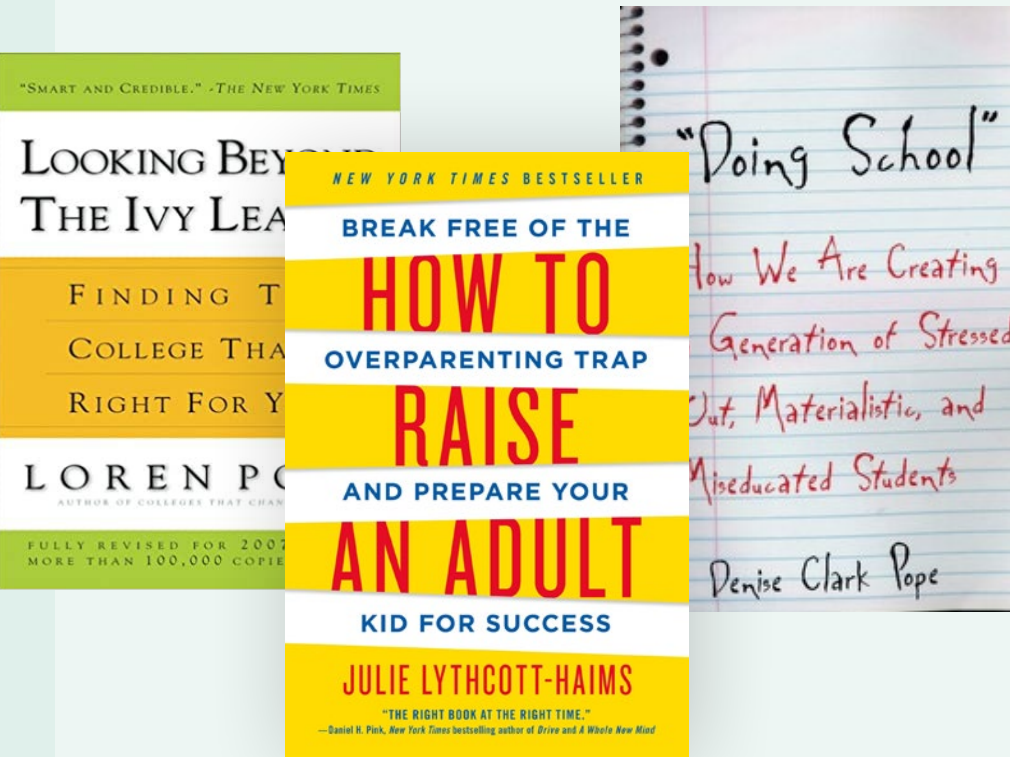
The Jed Foundation is a nonprofit that exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation’s teens and young adults.

[Center for Parent and Teen Communication](#)

The CPTC uses the best of science on youth development and parenting to support healthy family relationships and empower parents to effectively guide teens to be their best selves.

[American Student Assistance](#)

ASA’s mission is to help students know themselves, know their options, and make informed decisions to achieve their education and career goals. ASA is committed to helping students explore education and career options, experiment through hands-on opportunities, and execute a plan to meet their goals.



Books:

How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success
by Julie Lythcott-Haims

College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be
by Andrew Delbanco

Ready, Willing, and Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success
by Mandy Savitz-Romer, Suzanne M. Bouffard

Looking Beyond the Ivy League and Colleges That Change Lives
by Loren Pope

Acceptance: A Legendary Guidance Counselor Helps Seven Kids Find the Right Colleges — and Find Themselves
by David L. Marcus

Parenting Out of Control: Anxious Parents in Uncertain Times
by Margaret Nelson

Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed-Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students
by Denise Pope

To be a successful college applicant, it helps to know the lingo.



College readiness:

Your level of preparedness to attend college. Since going to college is about so much more than studying, a person's academic competence is important but not sufficient for being successful in college. Other critical tools in a person's "toolbox" include social-emotional skills, coping strategies, and life skills.

Fit:

This is a broad term, frequently used by school counselors and admissions officers, that describes the match between a college and an applicant. When a school is a good "fit" for you, it often feels right, in whatever way you might define that phrase. Ideally students feel an affinity for their college based on a number of factors, including academic, financial, social, and cultural.

Engagement:

This relates to the level of connectedness and participation you have in your college experience. It is best to look for a college where you will have many opportunities for engagement, social and academic. Examples include: having a mentor or professor who takes a special interest in you; the opportunity to work on a multi-semester project, write a research paper, participate in an internship; and involvement in any type of extracurricular activity (from sports, to choir to a religious group).

Holistic review:

An approach taken by college admissions departments when evaluating applicants. It is an application review process that celebrates each applicant as a whole person. As an admissions principle, an application is the sum of many parts and each part is one factor among many.

Rank:

College rankings are lists published by a variety of organizations, and used by students, families, and school counselors to guide them in the college search process. They are subjective and not necessarily an accurate indicator of quality or value. Ranking lists are put out each year by a variety of publications and organizations with their own criteria, methodology, and biases. Just because a magazine says that a particular college is "#1", that doesn't mean that it would be a good fit for you. Lots of intangibles and variables that might be important to you as an individual, such as student engagement or how supportive faculty is outside the classroom, aren't included in the ranking profiles.

Rolling Admission:

Colleges that offer this application option welcome non-binding applications over a period of time (rather than by a set deadline) and make admission decisions throughout the application period rather than on or by a set date for all applicants.

Selectivity:

A way to measure and understand your chances of being admitted to a particular college. Colleges are selective to varying degrees. A highly selective school admits less than 30% of applicants. The national average acceptance rate for first-time students across all four-year institutions in the United States was 66.7 percent in Fall 2017, which means that most colleges accept more than half of their applicants. It's helpful to remember that selectivity doesn't necessarily reflect quality, value, or a good fit for you.



The college admissions process can be complex, especially if it is your first time going through it.

The table below offers suggestions for both parents and students on how to broach topics related to staying calm and cool through it all. Scan, pick and choose to get the conversation started—and keep it going.

Topic	Parent Could Ask...	Student Could Ask...
What Kind of College Offers the Best Fit?	• What kind of a college could you really see yourself at (e.g., large vs. small, urban vs. rural, close to home or far away?) What have we left out? • Can you prioritize these things? • How can I best help you figure out what the best fit is for you? • What kind of information or research do you think we need to do to help figure this out?	• [If appropriate] What are some of the things you thought about in choosing your college? • What should I do if I don't really know or don't really have a preference? • Are there any things I should take into account in thinking about this, like cost or whether we can afford for me to travel? • I know you want me to go to a certain kind of college, but what if I don't want that?
Handling Stress	• You know, it's really normal for all of us to feel stress around this college stuff. What can I do to help to minimize it? • What are some things that I do that add to your stress (and I promise to try and stop)? • Shall we make a deal that you'll let me know if the stress is really getting to you? • Who else might you talk to about the stress you're feeling? Are there any other adults you can think of [<i>feel free to suggest any</i>].	• How about if we agree on a "no college talk" policy for certain times of the day or week? • Here's what makes me feel the most stressed: 1. ..., 2. ..., 3. ..., • Can we talk about what would help me most? • Here are some things that really help me unwind. Can you help me make sure I get to do some of these things throughout the week?
Creating a Supportive Family Dynamic Where all Sides are Heard	• I am so proud of how you're handling all of this. I know it's stressful. I'm here to help. • I have no doubt in the world that there is a college(s) out there where you will not only be happy, you'll be incredibly successful. My job is to help you find that place. • This is really not about what I want, it's about what You want – and I will support that. • It seems like you have your heart set on college X, shall we look for other colleges that have some of those same characteristics?	• Are you going to be disappointed if I don't get into a certain college? I need to tell you that I'm not sure what I can do about that. • Can I tell you the things that I feel like I have under control and the things I need help with? • Can I tell you what I need you to back off on – and let me do on my own? • Can I tell you the things I'm really grateful to you for your help with?
Roles & Responsibilities in the College Process	• Can we talk about the things that you want me to take responsibility for during this process that would help alleviate some of the pressure? Anything from college visits to reminding you of certain deadlines? • I know you have a lot on your plate between your studies, extras, etc., how can I best help alleviate some of that stress? • What questions do you have that you haven't been able to find answers to? Can I help with that?	• Here's some stuff that I'm feeling overwhelmed by at the moment, can you help me with.....? • I don't have a clue about (fill in the blank). Can I count on you to provide documents,what I need for this part of the college application/process? • Here's what I really don't need you to nag me about...