

# Faith



## Life Actually By Kari Kampakis 20 things college girls should know

It was a college football game weekend, and as my friend walked down sorority row with her teenage daughter, her daughter took it all in.

The energy. The buzz. The sea of people dressed in the school colors, full of excitement and hope. Out of the blue, her daughter asked an interesting question.

“Mom, what’s the hardest part of college?” Her mother said the first thing that came to mind: “Saying no.”

It was a funny answer, yet true. Saying no is the hardest part of college. Whether it’s no to Domino’s pizza at midnight, no to going out on Tuesday night because you need to study, or no to someone who is pushing you against your better judgment, it is beneficial and wise to get comfortable using the word no.

Having four daughters, I think a lot about preparing them for this stage. Here are 20 things I believe college girls should know.

► Boundaries are good, and it’s imperative to set boundaries for yourself because nobody will set them for you. College is one season of life where you can compromise your values without anyone blinking an eye. With nobody to monitor you — making sure you study, take care of yourself and choose healthy relationships — it’s important to set personal standards and decide in advance what you will and won’t do.

► College is when you turn into the person you’re going to be. Because friends play a major role in shaping this person, choose your friends wisely. The best friends are fun and good for you. There is strength in numbers, and finding friends on the same page with you helps you live out your convictions. Together you can

say, “These are our goals. We can do it.”  
► What you put into your body matters. Whether it’s food, alcohol or drugs, it impacts your physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Love your body enough to protect it. Make healthy choices that help you feel strong and good about yourself.

► Taking a few steps in the wrong direction can lead to more steps in the wrong direction. If you do something dumb, learn from it. Don’t repeat the same mistake or let your mistake become a pattern that’s hard to reverse later.

► You always have a choice. You don’t “have” to do anything that you know isn’t right. It’s okay to leave a party that’s getting too wild. It’s okay to ditch a date who’s being disrespectful. Think for yourself and be a leader. Look out for yourself and the people around you.

► Take care of your friends. If a friend’s not thinking clearly, think clearly for her. This may mean taking away car keys so she can’t drink and drive. Or pulling her back before she leaves with a strange boy. Or calling her parents when she has a serious problem that needs attention. Love your friends as you hope they’d love you.

► College can be a time to either neglect your faith or take your faith to a new level. Taking it to a new level gives you something to cling to. It provides an anchor that can center you and remind you of what’s real, right and true.

► Loneliness can sneak up on you at random. This is completely normal. With so many changes and uncertainties, you may occasionally miss the stability of home and familiarity of your old life. These growing pains of becoming an adult happen to everyone, and

talking yours out with someone can help you feel less alone.

► Professors love proactive students. When you talk to them, ask questions, engage in class and seek guidance, you build a rapport that may lead to job opportunities, increased confidence and better communication skills with adults.

► Learning to manage stress is a gift you give yourself. Having academic pressures and adult responsibilities is a lot to juggle. Finding ways to decompress and deal with stress — e.g. exercising, praying, listening to music, sleeping well, eating well, taking breaks with friends, and keeping a gratitude journal — can keep you calm instead of overwhelmed.

► You were made to chase your dreams, not boys. While boys are a part of your world, it’s unhealthy to make them the center of your world. Pursue your passions instead. Become the girl who eventually attracts the right guys as they notice you and think, “Wow. She’s awesome. She’s the package: pretty, smart, talented, and kind. I want to be part of her world. I want to know her better.”

► God’s grace is bigger than any mistake you make. Your mistakes don’t define you. If you happen to wake up one day and can’t believe who you’ve become — or if you simply feel disappointed in yourself — ask God to forgive you. Remember His mercies are new each morning, and regardless of what transpired in the past, you can still create a great future.

► Learning to listen to different ideas without believing everything you hear is a crucial life skill. As Aristotle said: “It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought

without accepting it.” College exposes you to many personalities, perspectives, and lifestyles. It can be thrilling and confusing. Open your mind to be enlightened, but form your own convictions and conclusions. Seek the truth by getting to know God since God is truth.

► Your parents love you more than you know. They long to hear from you, be part of your life and welcome you back home.

► Your best years are still ahead. Your future is full of hope.

College, in many ways, is an unforgettable experience. It offers the ultimate opportunity to expand your mind, your heart and your social network. And as you start a new life on campus, I have two other words to remember too: Enjoy it. Look around and take it all in. Enjoy the memories made and the friendships sealed. Know that for every time you say no, there’s another invitation around the corner.

Yes, college prepares you for work, but more importantly, it prepares you for life. It introduces you to life beyond home and to some of your favorite people who you’ll treasure forever and count on for decades to come.

*Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis is a Mountain Brook mom of four girls, columnist and blogger for The Huffington Post. She has written two books for teen/tween girls, “Liked: Whose Approval Are You Living For?” and “10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know,” that are available online and everywhere books are sold. You can join Kari’s Facebook community at “Kari Kampakis, Writer,” visit her blog at karikampakis.com or email her at kari@karikampakis.com.*

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