

Return of the Double Cohort

In September, 2003, parents in Ontario, Canada, sent more children off to university than in the any other year in the history of the province For this year, grade 13 was eliminated and so the last of the grade 13 students entered university along with the grade 12 students. This group of students is known in the province as the “Double Cohorts”. However, many parents throughout the world must adjust to the return of children from first year university. This article addresses their return and offers advice.

Like a sequel to a bad horror show the double cohort is back to haunt us. That’s right, first year university is over and thousands of Ontario youths are returning home to the roost. They are ready to light on unsuspecting parents.

Over their first year, they have somehow learned to manage on their own. They can go through beer like fish through water. They can stay up all night unfazed like a low-watt fluorescent bulb. They are independent and self-reliant. And now they are home.

For some parents it means no more swinging on the chandelier, no more sex in the kitchen, no more privacy. For other families it may mean having to share again, line ups for the bathroom and no more hot water as the washing machine churns on.

Parents have to adapt to their children’s newfound independence and the home-from-school students have to adapt as subordinates in the family tree.

How do they cope?

Unlike when your children were younger, parents can no longer simply demand obedience. You have finally raised young adults and they seek to be treated as such. Return from first year university is time to renegotiate the relationship and the rules. Most rules are no longer a matter of parental control. Now they must be conceived in the context of mutual respect and regard. The issue is not the curfew, but not disrupting the family when returning home late at night. Parents should no longer be maids with the home a hotel. Rather, this independent lot is quite capable of fending for themselves. They can do their own laundry.

The house with kids is now a group of related co-habiting adults. Expect and treat each other as such and the horror may subside to only be a drama. Embrace it and you can have a comedy.

Hey son, can I borrow a condom?

Welcome home.

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