



The Transition Zone

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

Let's talk about the transition zone, shall we? Normally, the transition zone refers to that area of latitude in which it's damn difficult to grow grass...and damn difficult to understand the thinking of those who pursue a career there!

Today though, we're talking about a different type of transition zone. The veteran types amongst the readership will understand instantly that this transition zone refers to that period of time in which the high school senior son or daughter drags himself or herself to the graduation finish

line...due to an extremely severe case of senioritis...and begins the transition into a responsible, self-motivated, independent, educationally oriented and driven college student. If only it were that simple.

Remember Mom and Dad...you were also once totally unmotivated, lazy, insolent, and possive of superior 18 year old intelligence...in your day. Your parents undoubtedly had the same problems with you as you now experience with your talented, but somewhat slow to motivate oldest child. I distinctly remember rebelling against my parents in various small

ways back in the day...with varying degrees of consequences.

So, do not overreact! As a parent, understanding and compassion of the senioritis thing is totally normal and expected. Do not get too harsh during this time...because young adults need their time...and their space! Do not do to yours as your parents did to you! Let them insult, ignore, and be at times ill-behaved! It's all part of the transition into well-mannered adults...sort of the ugly duckling transforming into the beautiful swan.

The senioritis is cured and the



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transition slowly begins when high school graduation night finally arrives. Parents, teachers, and administrators are all beaming with pride...as accomplishments, compliments, and awards are showered on these youngsters. Classmates who until recently rarely spoke to each other are hugging, crying, photographing, and making future plans together that will dissolve once they separate, enter the zone, and then get carted off to college.

The summer transition zone between being a new high school graduate and the neophyte college student sees them all realize suddenly that a summer job is a really good thing. Maximum hours/maximum tips/maximum dollars are suddenly way more important than summer prep athletic conditioning...with hopefully enough sleep thrown in to enable a bright and early rising for work each day not hurting the cause either.

Parents try mightily to prepare their children for the real world. College is definitely not the real world...but it is a good training ground. The summer before college simply marks the beginning of their transition...but the transition zone requirement is that during this final summer we must continue to offer our new graduates our myriad of parental services...cooking, cleaning, shelter, advice, financial support, laundry, etc.,...which are part of our everyday parental real world...right up to the end of the transitional summer. During these weeks, we warn them that things will soon change greatly. We try to offer advice... which usually falls on deaf ears. We help them make their preparations...without doing it all for them.

As an interesting aside, isn't it interesting to observe the differences in female and male adult behavior in these situations towards their youngsters. The

male of any species...including humans...will help their young...but only to a point and mainly in matters of real survival.

Females...on the other hand...will mother, nurture, protect, overassist, and be more willing to allow reentry into the nest.

This is pretty much the case in our family. I cannot wait to push our nymph out of his secure little cocoon and see how quickly he morphs into the strong and brave adult that we expect him to become. His mother is a typical mother. Her role in his upbringing has been to nurture, protect, and assist. She is more quick to help him prepare, and a bit more reluctant to let him go. She has been the support person, the organizer, the administrator, the motivating force, the involved and social one, and the connection between families. I have been the simple provider.

So, it's a transitional zone thing for both of us also. Both parents must start transitioning and preparing themselves for a smaller family starting in September ...although Dad will have a much easier time with both the transition and the departure than will Mom.

I will truly relish the upcoming hardships that he will encounter and conquer. The mother will probably fret and worry too much over things that she cannot control...a definite female thing.

Parents, of any species, can really do only so much towards developing their offspring into strong adults. The influence of other forces and people now begin to take over where we leave off...which, along with the strong education...is one of the best attributes of the college experience.

To watch them grow, mature, and develop is really a kick as they progress through their teens...although most are too dependent on their parents. We

have been too easy on our son...in some ways. There is, though, a fine balance that all parents must walk between letting teens find their own way and still having high expectations that they must meet.

Parents cannot expect perfection from a son or daughter. Kids make mistakes...and have their bad habits...as do their parents. Parents must expect...and look forward to that day when it's time for the child to leave the home. Very soon now our oldest son, along with millions of other young Americans, will be stepping off into a new phase of their lives. It will soon be time for them all to sink or swim.

The theory must be that if they are eager to go...our responsibilities as parents are almost complete. If they are eager to go...we have prepared them well. If they are eager to go...they will undoubtedly succeed at school...and in life.

This summer serves as the final zone of transition between their current and their future lives. Let them go. They will do well and be just fine. ♡

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