So Your Loved One is Starting Vet School

TRANSITIONING TO VET SCHOOL—FROM EGGS TO TADPOLES

By Dr. Jen Brandt

Frog Facts

• Among most diverse animals in world (4500-6,000 species)
• Frogs need to be around water; are found in almost every environment
• Frogs are social creatures that live in groups
• Some frogs have toxic skin
• Frogs are known for jumping; not all frogs hop
• How fast a tadpole transforms depends on individual and environmental factors

The Life Cycle of a Vet Student

"May there never develop in me the notion that my education is complete, but give me the strength, leisure, and zeal to continually enlarge my knowledge."

Maimonides 1135-1204

Pre Vet School (Egg Stage)

• Grit/resilience/attitude
• Adverse Childhood Events (ACES)
• Psychological fitness
• Tolerance for uncertainty
• Attitudes toward help seeking
• Habits (optimal or suboptimal)
• Locus of control (internal or external)
• Excitement vs Anxiety

Perfectionistic Personality Type

Adaptive/Optimal Traits | Maladaptive/Suboptimal Traits
---|---
Reliable | Critical
Responsible | Unrealistic
Dedicated | Approval Seeking
Driven | Prone to Depression
Persistent | High Anxiety

http://image.slidesharecdn.com/froglife-cycle-powerpoint-6-638.jpg?cb=1409308696

http://hubpages.com/health/Common-Traits-of-a-Perfectionist-Personality-Type


http://image.slidesharecdn.com/froglifecyclepowerpoint-140829103737-phpapp01/95/frog-life-cycle-powerpoint-6-638.jpg?cb=1409308696

Dr. Jen Brandt

Director of Frog Development

• Coaching and Consultation for:
  ✓ Individuals
  ✓ Roommates
  ✓ Couples
  ✓ Groups
• Conflict mediation
• Education
• Referrals
• Good starting point!
First Year (Tadpole Stage)

- I’ve wanted to be a frog FOREVER!
- What if they picked the wrong frog?!
- What if I can’t become a frog?!
- What if I don’t want to be a frog?!
- Becoming a frog is different than being a frog!

Individuation: A New Sense of Self

Healthy maturing adults have an identity that is their own.

- Interdependent (H) vs Codependent (A)
- Grades ≠ Worth

2nd Year (Tadpole with two legs)

- This becoming a frog thing is hard work
  - I’m getting my feet under me—lol

3rd Year (Tadpole with four Legs)

- Waaaait a minute! Am I supposed to swim or hop?
  - What if I’m a better swimmer than a hopper?
  - What if everyone hops better than I do?
  - This leg situation is kinda cool

Senior Year (Froglet)

- I’m moving to a new pond!
- What if I can’t find my way around the new pond?
- I’m sooooo over being a froglet!
- What if I need my tail?!

Graduation (Frog)

- I’m a frog. I’m a FROG. I’M A FROG!!!!!!!
- What if I’m a terrible frog?
- Um, why do I feel like I’m a tadpole again?
Sometimes Communicating Effectively Requires Learning a New Language. Eliminate the Shame Game.

- How are you doing? (when you really mean, what are your grades?)
  - What are your grades?
  - Are you studying enough?
  - You should be studying more, trying harder...
  - You should
  - I want to school, I know exactly what it's like

- I went to vet school, I know exactly what it's like
- Our family is falling apart, we need you to fix it...
- Our family is falling apart, we need you to fix it...
- Why don't you answer my texts right away?!
- But...Aunt Edna only turns 90 once!
- But...it's Thanksgiving!
- But...it's our anniversary!

Healthy Communication 101
PS. LEARN MORE!!!!

- I love you
- My love for you is unconditional
- You can talk about school or not talk about school. I'm here to listen...
- What do you need from me?
- Find your own support network!
- What would be the best way for me to communicate with you?
- Offer advice WHEN SPECIFICALLY ASKED
- When are ideal times for us to connect (when and how frequently)?
- Ask for what you need—be specific

Relationships/Roommates
Stress reveals baseline tendencies and communication styles!

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Relationships are a Two-Way Street
Open-ended questions
Reflective listening
Empathy
Nonverbal communication

Express Appreciation
- Take turns sharing what you appreciated about your partner during the week.
  - “I appreciated you making dinner on Monday.”
- Avoid criticizing and interrupting while your partner is talking.

Who’s Gonna Do What? BE SPECIFIC!

- Who will do what chore?
  - When?
  - How frequently?
  - Be explicit about expectations (define “clean up”)
  - Are there exceptions? E.g. exam weeks? How will exceptions be handled?
  - Be careful about 50/50—fair doesn’t necessarily mean equal
  - WRITE IT DOWN
Plan Couple Time

- Set aside a specific day/time once a week for connecting
- Connection time is not argument time!
- Set aside a separate time for resolving conflicts

Learn How to Resolve Conflict Effectively

- Fight fair—focus on behaviors, not the person
- “I” vs “You” statements
- Don’t drag old arguments into the mix
- Keep the focus on the issue at hand
- Find appropriate ways to vent frustration
- Be open to change
- Don’t ignore problems
- Some problems are bigger than both of you—seek help

LDR’s: Establish Frequent and Regular Contact

- Remember I’s and E’s process differently
- Regular phone/online dates and movie nights
- Determine frequency and method(s) of contact
- Share tragedies AND triumphs
- Ask about each other’s day and LISTEN
- 3GT

LDR’s: Define the Parameters Together

- What are your concerns?
- How often will you visit? (who will travel/how/when?)
- Plan ahead for visits—mark your calendar and follow through
- Take turns visiting—it’s important to go “home” and for the stay at home partner to visit the relocated partner
- What domestic issues require a plan?

LDR’s: Make a Future Plan

- Here’s where I see us in a year. 4 years.
- Where do you see us in a year? 4 years?
- What will we each do during this time frame to make that vision a reality?
- Identify shared goals
- Identify strategies to meet those goals

LDR’s: The Upside

- Enhanced self-awareness and identity
- Not taking each other for granted
- Remember—it’s a choice
- Reunions are something to celebrate and look forward to!
LDR’s: Continually Invest in the Connection

• Send love letters, gifts, and care packages
• Send spontaneous emails that list all the things you appreciate about the other person (no complaints)
• Find creative and frequent ways to connect
• Keep talking, listening and investing intentional energy!
• Good relationships don’t just happen. They are work and they are worth it!

EXPERT HELP: EARLY AND OFTEN!!!

• Every year, students get into difficulty:
  • NEVER accessed the available resources
  • Accessed resources TOO LATE
• Every year, the vast majority of students are successful because they access the available resources!
• Every choice we make has consequences. Encourage your loved one to choose wisely.

Be PROACTIVE
Ask for help
Expand the network of support

It Takes a Village—
A Village is Available UPON REQUEST and FULL ENGAGEMENT

Personal and professional success requires initiative, accountability, priority setting, and balance

Life is all about choices

Healthy Individuals
Healthy Professionals
Healthy Families
Healthy Communities