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## Encouraging Families of HSC Daughters.

**There is no doubt that Year 12 is one of the most challenging years in a student's life. Yet over 65,000 students sit the HSC each year and survive. You will too.**

At Roseville College, our focus in the Senior years is to help girls and their families manage the final years of school well, ensuring it is a purposeful, productive and celebratory experience; not merely a seemingly relentless hard slog!

Certainly, the Senior years are challenging and stretching. There are no short cuts. It requires a concentrated effort.

We share this hope for your daughter: that each girl leaves confident in who she is, hopeful about her future and equipped to manage the opportunities that come her way.

Fortunately, even if this is your family's first experience of the Higher School Certificate (HSC), Roseville College is here to provide guidance and leadership through this significant time in your daughter's schooling. A few constructive tips as you prepare for the "ride", include:

### 1. Remembering the Basics

Eat well, live well and rest well. This means:

- Healthful food is good for learning and energy; fast sugars not so
- Water is vital; drink it, bathe in it, relax by it
- Balance is integral; plan a smart study routine (incorporating mental breaks), schedule regular exercise, and keep spiritually nourished
- Restrict technology, especially non-productive screen time and definitely in the hours before sleep.

### 2. It's her HSC

The HSC may be your daughter's first major experience with independence and consequence (good or bad). This "gift" of responsibility is all part of the "coming of age" package. The

HSC experience includes many opportunities to evaluate options, make decisions and take responsibility: subject choice, study routines, communicating with teachers, balancing commitments, and more. Hand it all over to her. Trust her as an emerging adult.

While she may benefit from gentle encouragement to stick to her study schedule, try to avoid over-parenting how she approaches her HSC.

A habit of highlighting that she's not doing enough (or is socialising too much) will only result in a year of conflict and frustration. Many girls place enormous pressure on themselves. I recall one student sharing that she'd asked her family to, "Please don't put any more pressure on me; I'm already putting too much on myself".

Instead of retreating into the background, maintain an appropriate interest. Be cautious about giving too much unsolicited advice; be a willing listener and anticipate (and forgive) your daughter's, likely, very strong emotions.

The cusp between teenager and adult is a season of change for both the girls and their parents; for students the focus is on an increase in responsibility. For parents, it's the opposite – "letting go" of responsibility isn't easy; but now is the perfect time to practise keeping some opinions and comments to oneself...

### 3. Access the Knowledge

There is a lot of information produced to help you support your daughter prepare for her HSC: Year 10 UAC Guides, HSC parent advice on the NSW Education Standards Authority website (NESA, previously known as the NSW Board of Studies), alongside syllabus and policy documents.

Consider Roseville College's parent support materials and make the most of resources that can help you better understand, empathise and support your daughter at times of stress and overwhelming pressure. At the very least, become familiar with the sort of resources that are available to parents, as well as to the HSC candidates.

### 4. Feedback Really Matters

Our graduates often tell us they felt that many people – teachers, friends and family – were cheering them on, willing to help, and offering them direction and feedback during the HSC years.

However, the type of feedback that is most constructive during the HSC is from teachers when they guide a student in how they are going, where they are going, and where they should go next in their learning. Eminent educational researcher, John Hattie says, "The simplest prescription for improving education must be dollops of feedback".

When your daughter comes home with an assessment result, endeavour not to ask, "What did you get?" Instead, ask, "What feedback did you get?"

Teachers at Roseville College are ready and willing to help HSC students and their parents set the best course of learning to achieve the best possible outcome for girls. Yet, some students find it difficult to seek further feedback, not knowing how to ask. If this is your daughter, offer assistance by helping her draft an email to her teacher, or talk with her about the sorts of questions she could ask her teacher to ensure that each conversation is productive. In formulating questions and thinking about her responses, look for advice that guides areas of improvement and the best "next steps" in learning that your daughter could take.

### 5. Expect the Challenge of 'The Unexpected'

Excellent research into brain plasticity and intelligence offers fresh, new approaches for parents (and teachers) to try in those rare HSC moments when it feels like things have gone backwards. Such moments still catch parents and students by surprise, depleting motivation and casting a shadow over the remaining HSC journey.

In reality, learning doesn't always go to plan. Research validates the importance of having a plan in place, with your daughter if possible, about what to do if (and when) the wheels fall off. Provide perspective, set in place constructive ways to learn from past mistakes for future gain, and help them discover that learning is often more effective when it is hard (when you have to work for it).

### 6. Have a Safety-Net Ready

When the wheels come off or other misadventure befalls, have your safety-net ready. This is like a resource list that you can refer to in an emergency! Know what support is available to catch your family and, importantly, your daughter.

At School, we have a team in place to gird up your daughter's wellbeing and her learning progress; get to know her Year Adviser, our Executive team, our Careers Adviser and our Department Heads. In your local community, make a note of trusted and skilled psychologists, counsellors, tutors and mentors who can come alongside your family and daughter if need arises – you may already have an idea of the type of support and services she may need.

At HSC preparation seminars and in relevant resources, pay attention to the detail; such as support for students due to illness or misadventure, educational access schemes, and alternative pathways for post-school destinations. Hopefully you will not need it, but it is at the ready.

### 7. Model the Way

It is vital that girls see the HSC years as part of a lifelong learning *process* – one step at a time. While the HSC years culminate in an examination and an ATAR, the HSC is not a punctuation mark in their learning journey. Each assessment

adds to that ATAR, but none single-handedly decides it. Apart from an ATAR, there are always opportunities to explore alternative post-school destinations or career pathways. Make time to connect with your daughter throughout the process, perhaps over a coffee without somewhere to rush. Share reflections on your own challenges, successes and struggles as a vehicle to invite her to share about her own feelings or experiences at this time. Your sense of perspective about lessons learnt and "life after" from your own HSC (or matriculation equivalent) can contribute to your daughter having a more open approach to her HSC and may fortify her with courage for a range of life events in years to come.

### 8. Balance

Each year we invite recent graduates to share the story of their HSC year. Many have achieved outstanding results and overcome significant obstacles. Year after year, they share the secrets of their successes. Surprisingly, few talk about exams, timetables, study tips, note making, subject choice or how stressed they were. What they emphasise is this: although the year was hard and there was plenty of work, the key is a good mindset. This includes the values they forged through the process, their persistence and resilience, their friendships, and how they actively sought to belong.

They talk about how optimism helped them survive the tough times by having something every week to look forward to, not taking themselves too seriously, by being kind and listening to others, and not complaining constantly (especially if it deflates others). Graduates speak about the value of participating in sport and co-curricular activities, and the critical value of sleep! They want the current candidates to get the basics right because their experience shows that when these non-cognitive factors are right, the rest will fall into place.

### 9. What Really Matters

Tellingly, during one such reflection, a graduate said that while she did not walk away with masses of silverware from Roseville College, what she left with is far more valuable. She said, "I take away an invaluable, intentional, and purposeful education with deep roots in values such as gratitude, forgiveness, love, kindness and persistence. I know my spiritual self and trust what is right and true. I have experienced the importance of serving others and I walk away with a sense of belonging, knowing I am always welcome back." Such sentiments are at the heart of wellbeing and success for the Senior years at Roseville. Your daughter is unique and precious, so love her well and deeply.

I wish you my very best over the coming years. We are committed to supporting you – this is your journey too. While there is no 'right way' to be an HSC cheer-squad or support-team, there are certainly many ways to try and each girl's family knows her best. Hear every child's hope: "I just want to make you proud."