

Three years ago, my husband and I dropped off our son, Eddie Mo '20, at St. Andrew's on the opening day [the family is seen here in a photo taken on that very day]. From the moment we arrived, the kindness of the school community, the passion for teaching and learning, and the enthusiasm for a new year ahead could be felt everywhere on this beautiful campus. This reassured us we had made the right decision to send Eddie to St. Andrew's. We were really happy for him. But after going back home, with an empty spot at the dinner table, his two younger sisters started to ask when Eddie would be back from school, and even our dog, Stella, seemed to miss him. I was also hit by many questions: Are we going to have regular communications with him, and how? Will we miss out on those important moments of Eddie's high school years? Most importantly, how can my family bond and grow when one member is two thousand miles away? As a first-time boarding school family, we had to figure this out.

Thankfully, a warm-hearted mother of two successful St. Andrew's students shared her magic with me on how to stay connected: making an agreement with your child about the frequency and the duration of phone calls, and even choosing a "theme" for each call to make the conversation more meaningful. We tried this practice with Eddie, and it worked!... but only for the first time. Then our weekly phone calls quickly decreased from several minutes to less than one minute. It generally went like this:

"Hi, Eddie, how are you? We miss you!"

"Hi guys, I am doing well. I miss you too. Ok bye."

"Oh, take care, we love you."

"Love you guys, ok, got to go."

Then there were no phone calls unless we pre-arranged that with him.

The magic was not really working for us. I comforted myself with "Well, no news is good news"—but I was not going to give up. We needed to find other ways to stay connected with Eddie. If we couldn't communicate with him directly, we could at least try to stay in touch with the people and community around him. Fortunately, St. Andrew's has provided plenty of resources for parents to stay on the same page with our students. My husband and I would read [the Friday News](#), [school magazines](#), school newspapers, emails, and then share these with other family members at dinner time. Eddie's sisters, Sophie and Katie, were very good at spotting him in [Vidigami updates](#). We reached out and participated in St. Andrew's events in northern California. We visited St. Andrew's whenever we had the chance. We stayed in touch with advisors, teachers, current students, school alumni, current parents, and even parents of previous students. When Eddie "finally" called us, we started to surprise him by knowing a lot about the school events, books they were reading, guest speakers who visited school, current issues the

community was discussing. And you know what? He no longer just gave simple “yes or no” answers—he started to fill us in with many interesting stories. Very soon, not only did we have a “Middletown” sign on our dining room wall, we actually felt as if we were in this community at Middletown.

After Eddie went to boarding school, we missed all of the spontaneous interactions with him. The times he came back for school breaks seemed so valuable now. We suddenly had a sense of urgency to spend our time together wisely. His sisters and our dog came out from their rooms and tried to stay with him as much as they could; Dad would reschedule his business trips to spend more time with Eddie; and I stopped nagging him for small things such as homework or getting up early. Instead, our conversations were more about topics we both care about.

Once, we talked about why I could never efficiently help Eddie’s youngest sister, Katie, with her math. No matter how patient I was, every single time she would end up crying out, “I am not good at math, I hate math.” Eddie related this problem to a book about mindset he had recently read at St. Andrew’s. We discussed the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. We even talked about some baby-steps Katie and I could try together to help instill a growth mindset into her learning. It was like magic. By the time Eddie returned to school, Katie and I had started to enjoy more time together working on math. My husband was impressed and joked that this was really a good deal: one tuition for Eddie at St. Andrew’s, three students educated.

Last summer, when I was driving with Eddie to the dentist, as a busy working mom of three kids and a dog, naturally, I started making phone calls as I got into the car. After several bumpy stops and sharp turns, Eddie, who was sitting at my side, finally said, “Mom, you really need to practice ‘living in the moment’, even in your daily driving. This is too dangerous.” “Living in the moment?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, “focus your attention on what is happening right now, drive safely for your own good, and for ours too.”

I was shocked. Why didn’t I realize this before? Being busy had become an excuse for me, rushing from one place to another, forgetting to slow down and live in the moment. I was so amazed by the way Eddie talked with me, as a good friend who cared about me and was willing to help. I also felt grateful to St. Andrew’s, for not only teaching my child the values and concepts, but also teaching him how to *apply* those ideas to daily life, and how to bring those values and concepts to people around him.

Three years ago, when we dropped off Eddie on this campus, we knew he would be happy, be safe, be nurtured, and be transformed into a very fine young man. But at that time, I worried our relationship with Eddie would be sacrificed. Now, it turns out our

family bond has become deeper and stronger. We have grown along with Eddie as a family.

Thank you, Eddie! Thank you, St. Andrew's!