
Life after Yale may be wonderful or intimidating or both at once. It will definitely be an adventure! You will continue to have many resources to assist with the transition, including your family, Yale friends, new coworkers, and Yale resources such as the Association of Yale Alumni (AYA) and Office of Career Strategy (OCS). Alumni have offered a range of practical advice to help you.

The Transition

Whether to celebrate a success or to help you through a lonely time, your Yale friends can continue to be an important part of your life. Whatever your situation, staying in touch with other Yale alumni will help ease the transition. Here’s what alumni have to say about maintaining connections.

It’s scary that graduation day is the last time you’ll see people until Harvard-Yale. Students should make an effort at the end of the year to accumulate phone numbers and email addresses of your friends.

—Alumnus

Schedule time to talk on the phone/Skype regularly with your far-flung friends. The real world can get lonely, now that everyone’s scattered around the globe.

—Alumna

You will soon realize that there are many amazing Yalies out there who you never met in college. Tap into the network with happy hours and AYA events and you’re bound to find some fast friends. Also don’t forget to stay in touch with your favorite professors. They’re still rooting for you, and they enjoy updates on your success.

—Jennifer Shelby ’13
One challenge that young alums experienced in the transition was the evaporation of an instant social network. In college, you are surrounded by intelligent and interesting people of a similar age who frequently share similar interests. There is a steady stream of extracurricular activities, parties, and social events to fill your social calendar and allow you to mingle with possible romantic partners and new friends. Some of you may find that after graduation, time and financial constraints make developing and maintaining social connections more difficult. The key is to get involved. Join book clubs, sports teams, and musical organizations. Become active in local politics, community theater, and the local university. Volunteer your time with children, students, the elderly, and the homeless.

Unfortunately, the real world is not like college. You won’t have dozens of friends within walking distance of your home. You may already know this, but what’s important to note is that grad school is also not like college. Your peers will be more consumed by their work and more invested in their own lives than were your friends at Yale. Your fellow students will be at varying life stages, so some may or may not even be looking for friendship beyond that of a friendly colleague. But try not to go visiting old friends every weekend at the expense of creating a new life where you are. Invest yourself in your new life and enjoy the freedom to add or discard elements of it in order to make it work for you.

—Alumna

For some, life after college can be a difficult time. Here’s what alumni had to say about their transition periods.

A surprising number of my friends have gone through at least a brief, mild bout of depression in the past year...I don’t mean to depress the graduating seniors, but I think if I had known that people had gone through it and felt the way I did before it all happened, it would’ve helped. I really missed Yale and had to sort of grieve for it.

—Alumna

The first year or so out of college will be a time of great change. People around you and people you stay in touch with will experience and express everything from utter joy at their new amazing job, to bottomless depression at their unemployment. Try to remember that things change quickly and the learning curve is steep. You will grow
up more in the first few months out of college than you did your four years at Yale.

— Alumna

Feeling adrift, slightly lonely and vaguely discouraged are common to a surprising number of recent graduates, and for good reason. Even those of us who graduated with a direction (I will be doing “x” next year.) were not necessarily sure that that was the correct direction, and many of the support mechanisms (friends in the dining hall, college dean, etc.) were far away.

— Alumna

Sometimes, quitting or leaving can be the strongest thing you can possibly do. I think a lot of Yalies have gone through life feeling pressure to see every commitment through to its end, which is often an admirable trait. But if you have inadvertently chosen a job or a program or a city that is making you completely miserable, it’s more important to investigate that misery and figure out how to fix it than to finish out your original plans. In all likelihood, whatever you find to replace the thing you quit will be closer to the path you actually want.

— Alumna

Outside of an academic environment, it’s all too easy to fall into the trap of defining oneself by one’s job, or by one’s relationship status, or by one’s income (just to list a few sources of uncertainty/angst for people starting out their young adult post-college life). It’s quite the challenge to set down new roots and find a new identity/sense of self in a new place you may be living in for the first time. Therefore, I think it’s extremely valuable to find a new community that can support you through the growing pains and period of transition—as quickly as possible. I found this through my church, but you can find it through any group that gathers for a shared interest: a book club, a cycling team, pickup soccer, a community violin quartet... really anything where people get together to do something they love. Otherwise, I’ve seen a lot of fellow post grads have a very tough time trying to adjust to a world in which their friends are no longer just a few blocks away, and where you might not know who your neighbors are.

— Alumna ’13
Moving Back Home

Whether you’re saving money for graduate school, searching for a job, or just trying to get your finances in order, some of you may find yourselves heading back home to live with your family. Though you may have spent time at home during breaks, most of you haven’t lived at home for almost four years. Moving back home after four years of relative independence can be a bit of a shock for you and for your parents. Not only are you used to being independent, but your parents may be used to having the house to themselves, especially if you don’t have any younger siblings at home.

To avoid straining even the best of relationships, it is important to discuss expectations. Don’t wait until you arrive home at 3am and find Mom and Dad waiting up for you to learn that your parents are expecting you to follow the rules that were in place before you left for Yale. It’s also important to discuss length of intended stay. Your parents may be glad to welcome you back for a month or two, but may not be thrilled with your intention of living there for a longer period of time. Topics to discuss with your family include the following:

Finances: What financial contributions are you expected to make to the household expenses? Are your parents charging you rent?

Coming and Going: Do you need to call if you will be staying at a friend’s place? Are friends/significant others allowed to stay over? Do your parents expect you to be home by a certain hour?

Length of Stay: How long are you intending to stay? Is the situation temporary or long-term? It is possible to outstay your welcome. Discuss your goals and expected timeline with your family.

Household Contributions: What chores will you be responsible for? Will you be eating dinner with the family or cooking your own meals? If eating with the family, how much will you contribute to groceries?

Keeping the lines of communication open during the transition period will help you avoid uncomfortable conversations down the road.