

Why It Feels So Terrible to Drop Your Kid at College

August 24, 2018

For an adult who is no longer young but not yet old, there is perhaps no better preparation for death than sending a child to college.

That's not because it's a reminder of the ceaseless march of age, though it is. It's not because it unleashes a stampede of wild memories, though it does. And it's not because it's a moment that marks multiple beginnings and endings, although those fires do ignite and extinguish.

It's because adulthood distances you from the experience of dreading things that are certain to come about eventually. It's not that you dread more things, or graver things, when you're a kid—time seems to lurch slowly, death seems long off, bills don't stack up, and all the rest. But for young people, dread for small things feels constant. They aren't in as much direct control of their lives as adults are, and many things feel like they *happen to them*. By adulthood, that relationship with dread wanes (even if others, like the shadow of certain death, wax). Sending your child away to school offers a taste of that particular flavor of fate—as well as an inspiration to manage it more deliberately.