

Mary Miele ([00:03](#)):

Welcome to Be Evolved, a podcast for parents and educators who prioritize developing possibility and expansion within the total educational process for themselves and their children or students. We invite you to listen to the podcast with your child or student in mind and with yourself at the center of the learning experience. Ultimately, our goal is to bridge the gap between educational expertise and research translating it into practical action. Gaining knowledge plus taking action is what it means to be evolved.

Sarah Bergin ([00:40](#)):

Welcome back. Sarah Bergin, Director of College Counseling at Evolved and I'm so excited for you to hear the third part of our College Visit podcast series. This is the On the Way Home and we're going to process what you just experienced. I'm guessing that right now you've just kind of walked off the college campus and you've settled back into your travels home and you're really ready to think about how you're actually feeling. So the visit and the return home can actually stir up a lot. It can stir up excitement, uncertainty, relief, overwhelm, clarity, confusion, and sometimes everything in the same afternoon. So this episode is really here to help you make sense of it and unpack it before the impressions fade and before anyone says something they'll regret in the driveway. So same format as episode two. I'll guide you and then offer some pause points for you to talk through and then press play when you're ready to continue on.

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So let's get started. So the first thing we're going to think about is the first reaction and why it matters. So let's start with your gut, not the analysis, not the pros and cons list, just the raw immediate reaction you had walking off that campus. And I want to say something important. Your gut is data. It doesn't override everything else, but it's real information and it deserves to be heard before logic comes in and starts explaining it away. I've seen students leave with a hard to articulate yes and then spend three weeks talking themselves out of it. And I've seen the opposite. A student logically concluding a school checks every box but never quite feeling it and both gut reactions deserve attention. So let's get them on the table. Parents, you're going to go second, let the students speak first and without editing or responding, I want everyone to just listen in this part.

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So this first pause point is going to be the first reaction. So students, first again, in one word or sentence, what is your gut feeling about what you just visited? And parents, again, you're going to go second, same question, one word or sentence, gut only. And then now, okay, do your reactions surprise each other. After you've both shared, were they similar or were they different? So take a minute to pause and have a conversation and then go ahead and press play when you are ready to keep listening. So were you surprised by what you heard? And I'm so excited that you took some time to think about those first impressions. So let's think now about what you actually experience. Memory fades fast, especially when you're doing multiple visits. So while it's still fresh, what did you actually see and notice today? And this is where your notes that you jotted down may come in handy.

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So think about the tour. What did the guides say that really stuck with you? Was there a moment where you thought, I can really see this? Or was there something that just felt off? So think about the info session. Did anything change how you thought about the school and think about the in between moments, students you overheard, the energy in the student union, how the campus felt. Those unscripted observations are often the most honest ones. So during this pause point, I want you to think about what you noticed. So students, I want you to name one specific moment from the visit that stood out. It can be positive or negative. What was it and why did it stick? Parents, same thing, one observation that you keep coming back to. And then between both parents and students, did you notice the same things? And what did one of you see that the other completely missed or didn't notice?

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So take a minute to pause and then hit play when you're ready to come back. Okay. So now I want us to revisit your intentions. If you listen to episode two on the way there, you set some intentions. You talked about what you were hoping to feel, what you wanted to learn, and what ground rules you'd hold onto. Did you get the feelings you were hoping for? Did you learn what you wanted to learn? And did the ground rules hold or did things get chaotic? There's absolutely no judgment either way. The question I really want you to sit with is, did today match your expectations? Because surprises, both good and bad ones are sometimes the most useful data we can collect on a visit. And I do want to point out that as you do more visits, this process that you will go through to prepare and unpack will get easier and easier because it will become more routine for you.

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So during this pause point, I want us to check back in. So student, before the visit, you were hoping to feel something specific. Did you? And what actually happened? Parents, was there anything about the school or about how your student responded to it that genuinely surprised you today? And then for fun, on a scale from one to 10, how well did you each stick to the ground rules you set this morning or whenever you arrived to campus? So let's be honest about that. So take a minute to pause and then go ahead and come back when you're ready. Okay. Now let's think about the yes, no, or maybe. Let's zoom out. Today's visit didn't happen in a vacuum. The school is one piece of a larger picture. And here's a framework that I use with every student. The yes, no, and maybe pile. The yes piles for schools where something clicked.

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You can picture it. The no pile is for schools you can remove with clear conscience. Removing a school isn't failure, it's focus. A shorter, more intentional list is almost always going to be stronger. And then we have the maybe pile and this is where most schools land after a first visit and that's completely normal. Maybe means I need more information. I want to see it again. I want to talk to a student who goes there or dig deeper into a specific program and I want to name something real. Sometimes a parent loves a school and a student doesn't or student is quietly excited and a parent is underwhelmed. And these mismatches are totally normal, but they need to be talked about honestly rather than one person overriding the other. So at this point we're going to go through this yes, no, or maybe. So for each parent and student, where does today's school land for you right now?

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In which pile? Yes, no, or maybe, and tell each other why. If you landed in different places, what would it take to move towards each other's view without kind of overriding each other and think about what information is missing. And then for the student, is there anything you wish you'd done differently today, a question you forgot to ask, something you wish you had seen? And I would encourage you to jot those down so that when you head to your next visit, you have those. So take a minute to pause and then come back when you're ready to think about what comes next. All right. In this section, we're going to think about what comes next. So before the day gets away from you, before you've gotten home or maybe you're flying somewhere, I want to offer you some advice on what to do with all of this.

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You've heard me say this a few times. Write something down, okay? Not a full essay, but jot down some bullet points. What really stood out? What felt on or off about the visit? What questions do you still have? Do it while it's fresh. It's so important. If this school landed in the maybe pile, think about what would move it. A second visit during the school year, a virtual info session, a chat with a current student. Think about that and jot it down and then register your visit on the school's portal if you haven't already done schools. I mentioned in the first episode that some schools actually wait demonstrated interest and a logged visit is one of the clearest signals that you can send and give yourselves credit. You showed up,

you paid attention and you're now taking the time to actually process it together and that's exactly how good decisions get made.

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So let's take a final pause point here for the before you actually get home and I want you to think about these questions. And this could be when you get home, but it's still fresh in your mind. So each commit to one action. So what is one thing you'll each do in the next 24 hours to follow up? Write notes, research a program, email admissions, look up a club, anything concrete. For the student, is there anything you want to say about today that you haven't had a chance to say yet? Parent, same thing, anything left unsaid. Take some time to chat with each other when you pause this and then come back when you're ready to wrap things up. Okay. So we're almost done here. And what I want to say is that this process is a lot. It asks a lot of students who are being asked to make one of the biggest decisions of their young lives and it asks a lot of parents too, navigating your own emotions while trying to support someone you love through something really huge.

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The fact that you're doing it thoughtfully, listening, talking, reflecting together makes a real difference, not just in the quality of the decision you'll eventually make, but in the relationship you'll have with each other on the other side of it. There's no perfect school. There are several right schools and the process of visiting, reflecting and talking is exactly how you find them. I'm here to support if you ever want that and thank you so much for listening to this series, Safe Travels Home and give yourself a big pat on the back for getting through this first visit.

Mary Miele ([10:27](#)):

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