



a newsletter for parents & families



September 2015

## Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month...

- ▶ The exploration and acknowledgement of personal values
- ▶ Long distance relationship strain
- ▶ Feelings of loneliness and homesickness
- ▶ A desire to feel connected to campus
- ▶ Roommate adjustments
- ▶ Experimentation with alcohol and other drugs
- ▶ Getting acclimated to a new type of academics
- ▶ Figuring out how to get organized and manage time
- ▶ Searching for a sense of belonging

## Spreading Their Wings

Students need to express their autonomy and spread their wings when they get to school. This doesn't mean that they've stopped needing you, though — of course not! You are an integral part of your student's support system and cheering section, and that won't change.

Learning to be autonomous, however, means that students need a chance to...

- Make their own mistakes
- Decide how to confront challenges
- Communicate with others when there's a problem



- Choose how to spend their time
- Take responsibility for their actions
- Struggle a bit
- Learn from experience

It's natural to be protective, wanting to shield your student from difficulty. Yet, students need things to get messy at times so they can learn coping strategies and become resilient. Figuring out how to handle the tough stuff — and tapping into the many supportive people on campus for assistance — will help your student gain strength and character.

So, be there to talk things through when students need that and to offer support, by all means. Yet, leave the actual "doing" primarily up to them. As a result, they'll develop autonomy and faith in their own abilities.

### How to Help

Here are some simple ways to help build your student's sense of autonomy...

- ▶ If your student asks, "Will you call the \_\_\_ office for me?" you can tell him that you know he can handle it and that you expect him to make that call himself. Practice what to say so he feels more comfortable taking on this task.
- ▶ If your student says, "I got in trouble because our stupid RA wrote us up" you can talk through the incident with her and expect her to take responsibility where it is due. Then help her process through the next steps so she can rectify the situation.



## Fire Safety Facts

Fire safety both on and off campus requires vigilance and common sense.

So, what can students do to keep themselves fire safe? Here are some recommendations...

- Respond to every fire alarm quickly and compliantly — you never know when it's the real thing
- Know where the fire exits are — have at least two ways out of each room
- Attend fire safety programs and awareness-building events
- Keep fire doors closed instead of propping them open — these are what keep fire at bay



### Be Aware

The majority of fatal fires happen in off-campus housing. What do many of them have in common?

- Smoke alarms were missing or disabled
  - Automatic fire sprinklers were lacking
  - Smoking materials were disposed of carelessly
  - Alcohol consumption impaired people's judgment
- Don't tamper with fire alarms, fire extinguishers or sprinkler systems — they serve a vital purpose
  - Follow the "no candles in the residence halls" rule — they often cause fires when burning unattended — and be extra careful if you choose to burn candles off campus
  - Know how to use a fire extinguisher — use the PASS system: Pull the pin, Aim low at the base of the fire, Squeeze the lever and Sweep side to side slowly
  - Keep an eye on your cooking and stay in the kitchen — unattended pans are the #1 reason for cooking fires
  - Don't allow your laptop to become overheated on your lap — it can start a fire
  - If you're going to smoke (where it's permitted), do so outside, never in bed, and consider the risks when you're drowsy or have been drinking — more people die from smoking-related fires than any other type
  - Be alert — alcohol impairment greatly increases your chances of being injured or dying in a fire

For these and more tips, head to [www.campusfiresafety.org](http://www.campusfiresafety.org).

## Academic Success Strategies

Successfully handling college academics requires some intentional strategies. Here are a few to share with your student...

**Keep Up.** College academics are likely different than what you experienced previously. There's absolutely *no* shame in asking for help if you're having trouble keeping up! Do it sooner rather than later so you can tap into help from your instructor, the learning center and more.

**Pursue Topics You Enjoy.** Take on a project that you *want* to spend

time with, rather than one that you feel you *should*. The process will be so much more enjoyable and interesting!

**Know and Be Known.** Get to know your professors and TAs. Stop by office hours or right after class. Being a known student is better than being an anonymous, unknown element.

**Go to Class.** Part of being that known element is going to class regularly. You just won't learn as much or benefit as much if you're not there. And instructors notice!

**Be Respectful.** What instructors *will* remember is if you're disrespectful when they're trying to teach. So, don't text during class, talk loudly with classmates, use obscenities or publicly shame them in any way. Bring up concerns privately, in a calm manner.

**Do the Work.** This one may seem simple, yet it makes all the difference. Do the reading, keep up with assignments and take responsibility for your learning. No one can impact your academic success the way that you can.



## Preparing for Family/Parent Weekend

It will soon be time to visit campus for this annual ritual. To make it a calm, positive occasion, here are a few questions to consider and act on ahead of time...

**Where to Sleep?** Book a place to sleep, if you're planning to stay overnight. Hotels, bed and breakfasts, and campgrounds typically book up quickly.

**What to Do?** Look through the campus listing of all there is to do that weekend. You may need to make reservations for certain things.

**What Does He/She Want to Do?** Check with your student to see what he/she would like to do dur-

ing your visit. There may be certain things students want to show you and people they'd like you to meet.

**How to Compromise?** Express the types of things you hope to do when on campus, too, so that everyone has some input into how things will go.

**Who Will Come?** Determine if siblings and other relatives will be joining you.

**Where and When to Eat?** Make meal reservations in town — it's a busy weekend! See if your student has a favorite joint to show you or if there's a restaurant that he or she has been itching to try.



**What to Bring?** Ask students if they'd like you to bring anything they need to school and/or take anything back — that'll help you plan your vehicle space.

We look forward to having you on campus with us!

## Cars on Campus

If your student has a car on campus, make sure he or she follows some smart rules of the road that go along with car ownership/borrowership...

- Always keep the car locked
- Don't have any valuables in there — especially in plain sight!
- Keep the license, insurance and registration up to date — and always available in the car
- Register your car on campus
- Respond to any parking tickets right away — they don't go away if ignored and often the fines and other consequences increase with time
- Feel free to say "no" when friends ask to borrow the car — it's not public property
- Abide by campus parking rules and general rules of the road

- Be vigilant when walking to your car at night and try to have someone with you — public safety is a resource, too
- Keep up with oil changes
- Inflate tires appropriately and check them frequently
- Respond to any strange noises or actions in your car — don't just let them go



- Have winter supplies in the car (mini shovel, ice scraper, cat litter for traction), if needed
- Don't use jumper cables unless you're sure what goes where — it's good to learn!
- Try to keep the gas tank at least half full at all times — you never know when you might be stuck in traffic or driving somewhere without any open gas stations
- If you're drowsy when driving, pull over in a safe location — being sleepy behind the wheel can be almost as dangerous as driving while intoxicated
- Don't text or use a cell phone handset while driving — distracted driving leads to many horrible accidents
- And, of course, don't drive under the influence of any substances!



# Getting — and Staying — Organized

One of the biggest challenges faced by college students is staying organized. It can be an overwhelming task as they attempt to balance multiple responsibilities, relationships and schedules. However, by applying a few simple steps, they can get — and stay — organized. Here are some strategies to share...

## SIMPLE Steps and Strategies to Organization

**Set goals and priorities** – identify your goals, prioritize them, break them down into manageable objectives and stick to them. Write them out and put them in a visible place — like your planner, on your phone or on your mirror. This will help motivate you and keep you focused.

**Implement a filing system** – Eliminate both physical and cyber clutter — and find things when you need them — by creating your own filing systems. This might involve using multiple files on your laptop and sorting through papers once instead of letting them pile up.

**Manage your schedule** – Your calendar is sure to fill up fast with all the meetings, activities, events, and of course, classes you need to fit into each day. Use one calendar for everything and give yourself some wiggle room in your schedule between activities, too.

**Prepare ahead of time** – Avoid procrastination, sleeping in or rushing to get something done. Preparing ahead will not only help you stay organized, it will also reduce your stress. Wake-up earlier, get your clothes and

## Stop the Paper Pushing

Paper can be the biggest enemy of organization. We are bombarded by paper — through the mail, our computers, newspapers, classes and meetings — it's everywhere! When trying to organize paper, do the following:

1. Act on it
2. File it
3. Toss it



Source: [www.lifeorganizers.com/school-family/college-organization.htm](http://www.lifeorganizers.com/school-family/college-organization.htm)

backpack ready the night before, make a to-do-list and write deadlines in your planner or phone.

**Lose the clutter** – When you enter your room at the start of the year, you do not have clutter and, likely, your mind works better as a result. How can you maintain a clutter-free environment? Recycle unnecessary

paper, have specific spots for specific things and use files to manage necessary paperwork.

**Edit regularly** – Every other month, edit through your paperwork to see what may not be necessary. With so much available on the Internet, information can get stale quickly. So, edit out the clutter and you'll breathe much easier!

## Feeling Lonely?

If your student is feeling lonely or homesick, here are some quick encouragers to share...

- Reach out to someone else who is looking lonely, too — you'll feel better together
- Step outside of yourself and work on a service project
- Take the risk to say "hello"
- Call an old friend
- Send 5 friends Instagram photos of you in front of a campus landmark
- Escape into a good book with a positive message
- Get those endorphins flowing with some exercise
- Head to a campus event to try something new
- Talk with a campus professional about how you're feeling
- Sleep on it and dig into a new day