the campus link
a newsletter for parents & families

SH TM

December 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:

- Much panic, fear, and cramming as finals and project deadlines approach
- High temper as stress mounts
- The realization that some friends may not be returning next semester
- Increased pressure to participate in sexual activity because of the approach of vacation and extended separation
- Financial strain due to holiday gifts and travel costs
- Religious conflicts as he/she gets ready to return home after a semester of gaining new perspectives
- Excitement/anxiety about returning home
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs

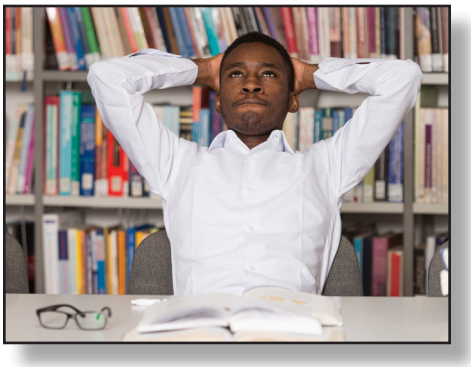
Supporting Students through the Final Stretch

While December is a time for holiday cheer, it can also be a very stressful time for students. From academic to social pressures, they're likely being pulled in a number of directions.

You can support your student by:

- Calling to check in so your student knows you care, but not requiring him to stay on the phone for long periods of time.
- Waiting to discuss important details or have thoughtful conversations until after finals are over – when possible.
- Understanding the pressure she is facing and validating her frustrations and stress levels.
- Helping him keep things in perspective (i.e. this will all be over in just a few weeks, grades aren't everything, etc.).
- Offering to take responsibility for the things you can (i.e. picking up gifts or running last minute errands, etc.).
- Making suggestions for eliminating stress.
- Reminding him to take care of himself.

Overall, your student may just need a listening ear during these next few weeks. If that's the case, let her vent, validate her feelings and remind her how much she is loved. More often than not, this is the most helpful thing you can do during this busy time of year.



De-stressing Suggestions

- Step away from the computer and take a 10-minute walk
- Chat with a friend for a few minutes to get perspective
- Get a breath of fresh air
- Listen to a few favorite tunes to shake off the "study fog"
- Laugh – watch a baby panda sneezing video on YouTube or a favorite TV comedy

The Season of Sneezing

The last thing your student needs during this season is sneezing! So, here are some tips to share when it comes to preventing the onset of a cold…

Wash Your Hands – Often! It's the single most effective way to keep from catching a cold or spreading one to someone else.

Cover Your Mouth and Nose When You Cough or Sneeze. The barrier helps keep germs contained.

Eat a Balanced Diet. A healthy diet includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, balanced with the other major food groups. Sometimes a daily vitamin can offer a good supplement to a diet.

Get Sleep! Bodies need time to rest and recover – and to process all of the information learned in a given day.

Move Around. Walk up the stairs instead of taking the elevator, go for a short jog, or crank out some sit-ups and push-ups as a study break.

Don't Let Stress Wear You Down. College is a stressful time, especially near final exams. Find ways to manage the stress productively.

Avoid Sharing with People Who Have Colds. This will greatly reduce the risk of catching a virus.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard your student works to maintain a healthy immune system, it's likely that she will contract a cold virus at one point or another. Therefore, in addition to being aware of healthy lifestyle strategies, she should be able to recognize primary cold and flu symptoms and know when to seek medical assistance.

Common cold symptoms include:

- A scratchy sore throat
- Sneezing
- Fatigue
- Nasal drainage
- Body aches
- A dry or productive cough

Colds persisting longer than two weeks or students experiencing symptoms such as a sudden fever, prominent headache or earache, extreme fatigue, and severe aches and pains could indicate an infection of the respiratory system caused by the flu.

If your student sounds like she might be coming down with a cold or flu, encourage her to visit the campus health center at the first sign of symptoms. While a cold or flu might seem like no big deal, it can be on a college campus! Your student's defenses may be down due to stress and fatigue, making it more challenging to beat the bug, plus it's easier to infect others when living in such close quarters.

Winter Break Career Prep

Even if your student hasn't put together a formal internship for winter break, she can still do some very positive things for herself when it comes to career planning and soaking up good learning experiences. For instance…

Arrange Informal Interviews. She can get in touch with a reporter at the local TV station if she's interested in communications or a researcher at the local hospital if biology is her thing. Setting up informal interviews with these practitioners, where your student goes in with some prepared questions about the field, can be a great way to make contacts while gathering useful information.

Tap into Alumni. It's worth connecting with the campus alumni association to see if there is an alum in his hometown who might be willing to talk with him. Maybe he can shadow him at work or attend a business networking event. Many alums love to help!

Create That Resume. It's an easy task to put off, yet winter break can be the perfect time for your student to settle in and put together a resume draft. That way, she'll be ready to visit career services as soon as she gets back to campus. Whether she's graduating this year or searching for a summer job/internship, having a resume ready is a HUGE step forward.

Think about References. Another area for your student to pursue is asking people to be a reference. Who can speak to his abilities, talents and character? Lining up these important people early is another very positive step in his career preparation.

Prepared for our institution by PaperClip Communications, www.paper-clip.com. Copyright 2015, 125 Paterson Ave., Little Falls, NJ 07424

5 Ways to Keep the Mind Primed and Ready

Yes, the holiday break is a time to relax and kick back with family and friends. That doesn't mean your student's brainpower needs to suffer, though! There are simple, interesting ways to keep the mind primed and ready for the upcoming term.

For instance, you might encourage students to…

Work on Puzzles. Do a crossword puzzle with granddad, attempt to answer the NPR Puzzlemaster's Sunday puzzle, or play Balderdash or Boggle with friends. Engaging in word games, logic puzzles and more is fun while also being brain-beneficial.

Talk about Learning. Recalling some of the key things learned in classes this term and sharing them with others is part of the college experience. By verbalizing what is being learned, the information is bound to stick with your student even more!

Read a Book for Pleasure. Engaging with multiple characters and plot arcs will help keep the synapses firing on all cylinders! Plus, it just feels *good* to read for pleasure after a term of academic-minded prose.

Learn Something New. It might happen during a conversation with a cousin who is studying nursing, while listening to the news or when hearing about a friend's experiences studying abroad. Encourage your student to soak in new information, search on the computer for more about a topic and stay curious!

Have a Fresh Experience. We tend to learn when we're in uncertain circumstances. So, why not encourage your student to attend a concert featuring music he or she hasn't heard before? Or attend a cultural/spiritual holiday celebration, a book reading at the local library or an Indian cooking class. There are so many interesting things happening during the holidays! And maybe you can experience some of them *together.*

Keeping the brain limber during the holiday break will help your student be ready to dig into the new term refreshed and well-prepared for the learning ahead!

Doing Good

What better way to spend time with your student than doing some good this holiday season? There are plentiful options…

- Make and deliver cookies to old teachers, along with a note about how college is going
- Help make and/or deliver holiday meals
- Donate old blankets and towels to local animal shelters
- Staff a gift-wrapping booth for an organization you believe in
- Adopt a family
- Head out with young friends, siblings, nieces/nephews to all pick out a toy to donate to Toys for Tots
- Do the same for a local book-collection drive, too
- Shovel out a neighbor
- Visit veterans at a local vet hospital
- Usher at a holiday concert
- Babysit for friends so the adults can get out to do some holiday errands

Who knows? An activity you try this year could become a lovely holiday tradition.

Increasing Students' Well Being & Decreasing Their Stress

There's a myth surrounding college in December: that it needs to be a caffeine-fueled, all-nighter kind of scene in order for students to do well academically as they wrap up the term.

However, that doesn't have to be the case. Sharing a few simple tips can help increase students' well being while decreasing their stress levels…

Develop a Study Schedule. Feeling prepared for finals can *greatly* increase students' confidence. One way to do this is for them to develop a study plan – and stick to it. By taking a careful look at what finals and projects are coming up and then devoting time to each, your student is much more likely to be confident and competent addressing the challenges ahead.

Take Positive Breaks. There are likely a good number of holiday happenings on campus these days. It's healthy for students to take breaks and partake of the festivities! That way, they can return to their studies in a positive frame of mind, ready to hunker down and get things done.

Recognize and Handle Stress in Healthy Ways. Some students decide to "blow off steam" by going out and getting intoxicated. Others alleviate stress by playing volleyball with friends or going to hear the campus

gospel choir's holiday concert. Guess which students will be more stressed as they try to recoup lost time and which will be rejuvenated?

Get Good Sleep. Concentration and focus are keys to your student's success during this academically rigorous time of year. And both of these things are helped along by good sleep. All-nighters may *seem* like a good idea, yet they can backfire when your student gets overtired and starts forgetting critical information.

Other important things, like stepping away from the computer, eating nutritious foods and not over-relying on caffeine, can help your student get through this challenging time in tip-top shape!

A Sense of Loss

The end of a term inevitably means that some of your student's friends will be leaving for good. This can create a sense of loss that may be surprising to your student, as college friendships can often become very intense very quickly.

So, if your student talks about "So-and-so isn't coming back," try to engage with some simple queries…

- What did you like about him/her?
- What is he/she up to next?
- How does this feel to you?

You can also encourage your student to keep in touch with that friend. It may sound overly simple, yet giving your student the safe space to talk about the sense of loss he may be feeling can help him process his feelings and heal.

Money-Making Possibilities During Break

Students can tap into their talents and hard work during winter break to earn a bit of extra money. Some possible ways to do that include:

- Offering tutoring in a subject they excel at
- Giving music lessons
- Shoveling snow or doing yard work for others
- Providing "sports lessons" for kids (e.g. how to pitch, dribbling techniques)
- Baking/serving for holiday parties in the area
- Hosting an "art day" during school vacation to give parents a break

Encourage your student to put out a notice – via Facebook, email or other format – to let friends and neighbors know he'll be back in town, and ready to work!

Prepared for our institution by PaperClip Communications, www.paper-clip.com. Copyright 2015, 125 Paterson Ave., Little Falls, NJ 07424