



a newsletter for parents & families



January 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:

- Feelings of happiness/restlessness from break
- A resolve to do better academically
- Renewed interest in classes
- New leadership skills starting to emerge
- Unwanted weight gain
- Cold weather blues
- Not many social activities scheduled
- Possible roommate changes
- Anxiety and uncertainty for those who just arrived at new school

Being a Balanced Individual

In today's fast-paced and product-valued society, it's easy to get caught up in the frenzy of doing as much as we can in as little time possible. Many folks associate quantity with success, rather than quality. But who says your student has to be one of those individuals?

It's a new year. Now's the time for your student to take stock of all he has on his plate and make resolutions to add some balance to his life. This certainly is easier said than done. Especially since it is mid-year and it is tough to abandon responsibilities. But now is the time for your student to assess all he is involved with — and whether those engagements are *truly* worth the associated time and stress. It's time for him to determine what is most important to him, so he can start making small changes now that will help him reach his goals.

Self-Reflection

Encourage your student to start by asking himself the following questions:

- What am I really getting out of the activities with which I am involved?
- Am I truly focused on what is most important to me?
- In what areas am I spending most of my time? Are these areas most important to me?



- Am I really “present” when folks need me?
- Am I truly engaged in my life?

Give your student some time to really think about these questions. If he is happy with his answers, great! If he is not happy with his answers, encourage him to consider trying some of these strategies:

Talk with his advisor/coach and/or supervisor about his commitments. They can offer him valuable advice on how to manage his time effectively, what activities will help him with his personal and professional goals, and more!

Think about the things that seem to stress him out most. Ask him what he does to take care of himself when he is really stressed.

continued on page three



Approaching Academics in the New Year

Now that grades have been distributed and your student is preparing for a new term ahead, there may be some academic concerns to face.

Reconsidering a Major/Minor.

As your student rethinks her major or minor, some questions may arise. Talk through the pros and cons with her, while also suggesting that she discuss it with her academic advisor or another trusted faculty/staff member before making a decision.

Failing a Class.

Does your student need to retake a course? If so, encourage him to be attentive from day one and to engage the professor should he need assistance.

Shaken Confidence. Not doing particularly well academically can

shake students' confidence. Hard work and *smart* work will help her get back on track. The learning center and campus counselors can help with a confidence crisis, too.

Needing More Study Time.

Lower grades often mean that students need to study more – and to learn how to maximize their study time. Folks in the learning center can provide tips. Help your student reconsider *where* he studies, too. If he sits on his bed, the temptation to nap can be great. If he studies in a noisy lounge, the distractions can be great. Brainstorm other options.

Focusing Too Much on Grades.

If your student is only focusing on grades, rather than what she is learning, she's not

getting the most out of her academics. So, ask her about classes from a "What are you learning?" perspective now and then. Sometimes having to verbalize it can help students really take a look at what they're getting out of a particular class.

Not Approaching Professors.

Most faculty members have office hours and stick around after class because they want to be available to students. Encourage your student to seek clarification in person if he has questions. Face-to-face encounters are often much more valuable than emailing professors because students become *known* that way.

Help your student examine her current approach to academics, from the perspective of both what's working and what's not. With your assistance, she can dig into a more positive academic year.



Successful Goal-Setting

Many of us tend to set goals as a fresh year spreads before us. It's easy to "go big" with renewed enthusiasm, yet successful goals aren't necessarily the broad sweeping kind. Instead, they tend to have the following traits, which can be good to share with your student...

They're Achievable. Set goals that are realistic within the context of your life. Too often the reason any of us fail is that we set unachievable goals.

They're Measurable. Use quantifiable words in your goal lingo rather than fluffing them up with concepts that are too general.

They're Short. Keep your goals to short paragraphs. That way, they're easier to commit to memory and always keep in mind.

They're Positive. State those goals in a positive manner that makes them appealing. It's a good way to motivate yourself mentally.

They Begin and End. Determine when you will start working on each goal and when it should be achieved. This will help you focus...and succeed!

By discussing goal setting now, you're helping your student create a guide for himself. Here's to 2015 and a fresh start!





Parenting a Commuter Student

Commuter students are juggling a lot, including making a place for themselves academically, socially and involvement-wise on campus. Campus life is not just for those students living in the residence halls! It's for commuters and their families, too.

You can help your student find his place and get the most out of college life by trying the following...

Encourage involvement. Studies show that students who are more engaged on campus tend to stay and finish their degrees while those who feel on the fringes may not. So, encourage your student to attend that rally during his lunch break or to attend an interest meeting for the school newspaper. Or maybe going to a car care workshop put on by the engineering department is more his speed. Trying things *outside* the classroom can help your student feel more a part of campus life.

Don't expect to see a lot of your student. Chances are that your student has a full plate with school, work and other involvements. So, if she doesn't come home for dinner, maybe it's because a classmate

invited her to the dining hall that night. Or perhaps she's working on a campus play, attending a meeting or cheering on the volleyball team. You may miss her, yet it's important that she's making these campus connections, too.

Suggest that your student connect with another adult on campus. If your student can find an adult mentor, whether it's a coach, advisor, professor or some other campus administrator, he'll feel

much more connected to campus. This person can challenge him, support him and show him the ropes.

Support your student's efforts. If she's presenting a paper at an academic symposium, try to attend. If she's playing in the

school orchestra, go to the concerts. Attend athletic events, programs she helped to coordinate, conferences she worked on... your support can mean a great deal, even if your student doesn't always let you know it.

Stay involved. Get to know more about the campus where your student is spending a good deal of his time. Maybe meet him for lunch one day to check out different nooks

and crannies, and to see the buildings where your student has classes and other activities. Read the literature that comes from campus and get on the website regularly, if possible, to check out the latest news. Consider joining the parent association or volunteering to help with another campus group, too. You are welcomed!

Commuter students are such a vital, vibrant component of campus life — and so are their families. This campus belongs to everyone.

continued from page one

Being a Balanced Individual

Suggest he pick three ways he can commit to "de-stressing" during these times. Perhaps he likes to run, watch movies and jam on his guitar. The next time he is stressed, encourage him to take five minutes or a half-hour to relax with one of these pastimes and clear his head.

Start thinking about next year. Now is the time when your student has to start thinking about running for leadership positions and applying for summer jobs. Encourage him to determine what is most important to him, what he enjoys most and then do his best to stick with commitments that match these terms. Remember, quality, not quantity, is what's important.

It's time we start equating success with those who take good care of themselves, lead balanced lives, and spend quality time with family and friends. Help your student become a more balanced individual today!



Provide a Quiet, Comfortable Study Space

College studies require much more time and effort than high school studies ever did. So, your student may be spending several hours of study time for every hour that he is in class — that's what most professors suggest. He'll need time and space to study effectively, without interruptions.



Helping Your Student Ask for Help

Countless numbers of people have a tough time asking for help — even the most seasoned professionals. For some reason, asking for help makes many people feel weak or vulnerable. Yet, help-seeking is actually a true sign of strength.

It takes courage to say, “I’m not sure how to handle this” and to reach out. By helping students understand this, they’re more likely to take advantage of the wealth of services available to them, right here on campus.

So, how does a student who isn’t the most comfortable asking for help go about doing so? Consider sharing these thoughts with your student as she considers seeking assistance in the new year...

Remember that even the best leaders have help. Even the president of the United States surrounds himself with the best staff he can. We don’t view this as a weakness, do

we? If he can ask for help, you most certainly can too.

Recognize your strengths and your limitations. Nobody is perfect. What do you do really well? In what areas do you typically struggle? Take stock of what you do well and let those around you know. This may help them feel more comfortable asking you for help when they need it. And find out what they do well so you can tap into their strengths, too. Remember, no one needs to go it alone. Teamwork is encouraged.

Be honest when you are in over your head. There will be times when you can’t do everything alone. When this happens, be honest with yourself and others. Nobody can do it all and there will be times when you have to prioritize. When you communicate this to others, they are more likely to be supportive and understanding.

Take stock of the resources on hand. Campus communities are

Remind your student:
When you help yourself, you are in the best position to help others. This simple mantra is a life lesson and as you well know, the earlier learned, the better.

chock full of great resources! More often than not — no matter what the issue at hand — an expert can be found right in front of you who can offer assistance. Why not take advantage of this? It’s a win-win for all involved.

Let others know when you’ve asked for help. Why hide it? When you let others see that you are willing to get help when you need it, you role model healthy behavior. Some folks really do have difficulty reaching out to others and admitting they need assistance. By being honest when you reach out, you are setting a great example for those around you.

Turning 21 in the New Year

A Rite That Doesn’t Have to Go Wrong

Will your student turn 21 this year? If so, consider having some proactive conversations about birthday celebrations...

21 Shots. Many 21st birthdays include “21 shots” of alcohol. This is *extremely* dangerous and has led to alcohol poisoning — and death — in quite a few instances. Warn your student about this dangerous temptation.

What YOU Want to Do. Friends and acquaintances may have ideas about how they think your student “should” spend a 21st birthday (i.e. going out, get-

ting drunk, etc.). However, he knows himself best and it’s all about what *he* wants to do! Encourage him not to be swayed into doing something that’s uncomfortable.

Make Memories. A 21st birthday is a great opportunity to do something memorable! Being compromised by too much alcohol or other drugs takes away those memories.

Trustworthy Folks. No matter how your student chooses to celebrate, encourage her to be with people that she really trusts. This, along with making responsible choices, is the key to safety and having a good time.



A non-judgmental conversation that begins with “So, what are you thinking about for your 21st birthday?” can lead to some positive, thought-provoking planning. As a result, your student is less likely to fall into the dangerous “I’m going to go drink myself silly” cliché and to really think about a memorable way to mark this milestone.