



a newsletter for parents & families



November 2014

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:

- Roommate problems and floor tension
- Academic pressures due to procrastination, workload and lack of ability
- Burnout
- Not feeling like he has the stamina to keep up the pace through finals
- Job search stress for holiday break
- Problems from increased alcohol consumption
- Lack of initiative to find new friends or activities because it seems social groups are already set up
- Concerns about going home at Thanksgiving time – whether it's concern about seeing changes among old friends, how things will be with family members or dealing with a romantic relationship

Campus Involvement: Benefits Galore

The out-of-class learning environment here is vibrant and vital! And students who are engaged in this co-curricular life can benefit greatly.

How is your student doing when it comes to campus involvement?

Now's a good time to see if he's taking advantage of all that college life has to offer. There's *plenty* to choose from, including academic, athletic, service and social options.

Asking Questions

You can gauge your student's level of involvement on campus by asking...

- What are the some of the events that have been happening on campus lately?
- What fun things have you done in the last week?
- What kinds of activities are being sponsored within your residence hall?

- Are there any major speakers or performances on campus this term?
- How are the athletic teams doing?

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The Value of Involvement

Your student may be trying new things on campus, from student government to the Outdoor Club, as a way to engage in campus life. Sure, it takes time and energy to be involved like this, yet the benefits for students are plentiful!

Engaged students tend to:

- Feel more connected to their campus
- Do better academically
- Learn leadership skills that can make them more confident and competent when job searching
- Graduate at higher rates
- Graduate on time
- Have an overall better collegiate experience

So, if your student comes home this break, talking about his involvement with the campus play, his desire to apply as an orientation guide or his extra work with a professor he admires, consider celebrating this engagement and all it can offer.



Dealing with Roommate Concerns

At this point in the game, students living on campus may experience some roommate tension. The honeymoon is over and things are getting real.

It's part of the living on campus experience – learning to cooperate with another person in your living space. Some tips to share with your student if she is in the midst of roommate strife include...

Bring Things Up. Encourage your student to talk *with* her roommate directly instead of *about* her with others. That's so much more productive and respectful.

Get Help. If your student isn't sure how to talk with his roommate or what to do in a certain situation, he can talk with his residence hall staff.

They are trained, kind folks who are there to help students, especially when it comes to roommate issues.

Be Willing to Compromise.

When two or more different people live together, no one is ever going to have things *exactly* how he/she wants it.

The art of compromise takes practice and roommate situations are one of the key places where students get to practice it.

Don't Bend So Much You Break.

At the same time, students shouldn't need to compromise so much that they are living in uncomfortable circumstances. Encourage your student to abide by her values and talk to her roommate so both of them are bending enough to

make things work without giving up key things that are important to each of them.

Roommate situations can impact students greatly, so encourage your student to try these strategies and to tap into the helpful campus personnel available to her. Things *can* get better, often with the help of a good discussion or mediation, so your student can be comfortable in her living space.



Helping Students Solve Their Issues

Part of our strategy involves helping students learn how to resolve their own issues, rather than doing everything for them. We'll provide the tools – from ways to bring things up to a roommate to mediation meetings – so they can handle roommate situations and learn lifelong skills in the process.

Making Room for New Traditions

With Thanksgiving on its way, your student is likely very excited to participate in family traditions that hold meaning to him.

However, he may also have some ideas about *new* traditions, based on things he has learned at school or concepts that new friends have introduced to him.

As such, consider how to stay open to these types of suggestions...

For instance, he might suggest something as simple as trying a "tofurkey" at Thanksgiving, because he is wondering about becoming a vegetarian. This may seem out of left field, yet it's pretty typical that students will experiment and try new things during their time at college. This is just one way that may manifest itself.

Or maybe he has some thoughts about involving younger siblings in community service during the holiday season. He may be engaging in this during his time at school and want to share the "rush" of doing good with his brothers and sisters.

New cultural and spiritual traditions may come up, too. Perhaps he has a Jewish friend who has introduced him to potato latkes, a food often prepared as part of Hanukkah celebrations. Try to be open to him sharing these with the family, as well as any other exciting things he may be learning.

New traditions don't trump the old ones – it's just part of including your student and the things he's finding interesting enough to share, based on his experiences at college.





The Vegetarian or Vegan Choice

Sometimes, students decide against meat. This may have happened to your student, a tip she shares just as the Thanksgiving turkey is thawing nicely. What does it mean when students become vegetarians or vegans? Here is a primer to make sense of it all.

Being a Vegetarian

Going meat-free is not a recent fad. A variety of people advocate or advocated for vegetarianism, from Albert Einstein to Mr. Rogers to Clara Barton, according to The Vegetarian Resource Group.

What Does It Mean? Vegetarians abstain from eating meat, fish or poultry.

Why? Reasons vary for being a vegetarian, including compassion for animals; a belief in non-violence; and economic, health, religious and ecological concerns.

A vegetarian diet can meet people's known nutrient needs, according to the American Dietetic Association.

Tips for Vegetarians

Consuming a variety of foods and the right amount to meet your calorie needs is the key to a healthy vegetarian diet, according to the USDA's Choose My Plate initiative. Nutrients to focus on include:

- Protein
- Iron
- Calcium
- Zinc
- Vitamin B12

Source: www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/tips-for-vegetarian.html

The key is eating a wide variety of foods from different food groups and limiting the amount of fatty, sweet substances.

Being a Vegan

Vegans go one step further by steering clear of animal products. This, too, is not a recent fad; it's just becoming more mainstream and recognized.

What Does It Mean?

Vegans avoid using or consuming animal products. This includes items such as milk, cheese, eggs, leather, fur, wool, silk, down and products tested on animals (such as chemicals or cosmetics).

Why? Veganism is the touchstone of a cruelty-free lifestyle, plus it provides benefits to the

lives of animals, to the environment and to individuals' health.

Students often choose to make a commitment to a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle during their college years. The reasons for this vary: their awareness is raised, they are able to talk with more people making similar choices, they are focusing on healthier living, they are stirred to get active and this lifestyle choice is one part of it, and more. It's typically not intended as a desire to make family life more difficult or to disparage your pork chops. Your vegetarian or vegan student may just be testing her wings and deciding what is important to her.

Luckily, there are a variety of options on campus that provide adequate nutrition for vegetarians and

vegans. Your student can also talk with folks in dining services about this lifestyle choice for assistance in planning nutritionally sound meals.

So, if you find that your student has decided to go meat- and/or animal product-free this holiday season, consider how he is growing and maturing into his own choices. Whether the decision to become a

vegetarian or vegan "sticks" in the long run, for now it is about who he wants to be and how he wants to put his passions into action.

Sources: American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org; Vegan Action at www.vegan.org; The Vegetarian Resource Group at www.vrg.org



Campus Involvement: Benefits Galore

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- Where are your favorite places to hang out on campus?
- What kinds of events are going on in the local community?
- What's the best way to find out about campus happenings?

By chatting about this topic, you'll let your student know that you care about more than just how he does academically. Participating in things outside of class will enrich him in multiple ways. So, encourage him to read flyers, the campus newspaper and websites, while also attending events. College is all about trying new things! Your student will reap the benefits as a result.



A Happy, Healthy Thanksgiving Break

How can you and your student navigate a happy, healthy family visit during the Thanksgiving break? Here are some things to keep in mind...

Discuss the Rules. Students who are used to being on their own timetable at school and making their own decisions may feel restricted by “house rules” when they return home. Consider sitting down with your student right away to talk about respectful ways of doing things that can work for both of you, such as the use of a vehicle, household chores, curfews and the like.



Share Expectations Early. If you expect your student will visit a relative or be part of an all-day celebration during break, share those expectations now. That way, she can also plan her time with friends so there are no misunderstandings or hurt feelings.

Provide Time to Unwind. Chances are that your student has been working very hard and could use a bit of downtime during break. So, don't be surprised if he sleeps in or craves some unstructured time. Having time to unwind, especially right before finals kick in, can do your student a lot of good.

You'll all enjoy your break and your time together more if you put these simple things in place. Happy Thanksgiving!

When a Student Returns Home...

- She may need to talk about a changed major, poor grades or other big things
- He may need to reconcile with someone he has felt distant from
- She may sleep a lot initially
- He may be out, catching up with old friends
- She may talk about missing her life at school
- He may need to talk through decisions about finances, classes and more
- She may seem different at times

Communicate about what you're noticing and keep yourself open.

Agreeing to Disagree

Due to what your student is learning and experiencing at college, new topics may come up over the Thanksgiving table. It doesn't mean she hates her Uncle Henry if she disagrees with him about something – it's likely just a sign that she's thinking in new ways and testing out her own opinions.

Writing Tips to Share

As end-of-the-term papers and projects loom large, here are some writing tips to share with your student...

Avoid the Passive Voice.

Instead of writing “The program was planned by Darla,” write, “Darla planned the program.” This makes it clearer and less awkward.

Be Concise. There's no need to be long-winded. Get to the point and steer clear of too much “fluff” in your writing.

Get Things Right. Take great care when spelling people's names, getting their titles correct and other specifics. Also do some careful proofreading. Spell check doesn't catch everything!

Attribute the Words of Others.

When quoting someone, put quotes around their words and tell where the information came from.

Don't Go “and” Crazy. When trying to cram a lot of information in, it's easy to insert “and” many times. However, this makes for a run-on sentence that is poor form and hard to read. So, if there are more than two “ands” in a sentence, consider turning that long sentence into two shorter ones.

Make Things Match. When referring to one person, don't use “they” later on. Also, make tenses match throughout a piece, instead of using “did” one time and then “does”

Punctuation Tips

Here is a university site that offers helpful punctuation tricks:

From Purdue University

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/6/>

the next. Singular/plural references should jive, too.

Read It Out Loud. One very effective way to self-proof is to read out loud. This will help determine the use of incorrect words, run-on sentences, mismatched tenses and more.

Sources: www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/WritingSkills.htm, www.arc.sbc.edu/writingerrors.html