



Webster UNIVERSITY

January 2010

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
- ▲ 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
- ▲ Wedding plans for those who got engaged over break
- ▲ Anxiety and uncertainty for those who just arrived at new school



Supporting Your Student as a Sounding Board

It's sometimes hard for parents to balance serving as a sounding board and assisting with a decision-making process versus making a decision for their student. Many parents believe they have to make tough decisions for their student, when in reality it serves students better when they make the decision with their parents' support and assistance.

Students have quite a few big decisions to make during their college years. Some examples of these decisions include:

- determining a major course of study
- considering summer job/internship options
- whether or not to transfer to a different college or university
- where to live on campus
- whether or not to continue dating a significant other
- thinking about quitting an athletic team or musical/artistic pursuit
- exploring graduate courses of study versus getting a job immediately after graduation

While it's likely that most students will utilize and value their peers' thoughts on these decisions, some will call home looking for help from parents. It's often easiest and quickest to

just offer advice, rather than listening to a student's thought process surrounding the pros and cons of a particular decision. It's also easy to devalue significant influences for them, at times forgetting what it's like to be of college-age or a member of the millennial generation.

As a parent, one of the greatest lessons you can teach your student is how to make a tough decision on his own. Of course, most individuals will always consider others' opinions. Those who are healthiest, however, have the ability to weigh those opinions in comparison to their own.

When your student does call home to process a decision, consider asking questions, rather than answering them. Here are some questions you can ask to help your student come to his own conclusion:

- If you had to make this decision right now, what would it be? Why?



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Supporting Your Student

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- How do you think you will feel about this decision four months from now? How about four years from now?
- What factors are pushing you towards this decision?
- What do you hope to gain from making this decision? Is there anything you stand to lose?
- How will this decision impact you (or you as parents!) financially?
- How will this decision impact you physically, mentally and/or spiritually?
- How does this decision help you further your personal goals?
- How will you handle the ramifications of making this decision?

If you can't spend the time to have a detailed conversation right when your student calls, assure him that you want to assist in the decision-making process. Let your student know that it's not a good time (i.e. you are making dinner or ready to head out the door with your student's sibling) and set up another time to chat. Your student will appreciate your honesty and commitment to providing him with your undivided attention. Plus, you'll be less likely to get agitated and short-tempered, especially if the decision is one with which you might not necessarily agree.

Having these types of conversations also helps the parent/student relationship continue to grow in maturity. As students get older and graduate from college, they begin looking to their parents more as peers. Knowing they can come to you for assistance with decisions not only will teach them valuable lessons, but will also continue to forge a meaningful network of family support.

It's a Meatless Kind of Monday

Did you know that enjoying a vegetarian diet one day a week is a way to reduce the carbon footprint of your food supply? In May 2009, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization published a report showing that meat production accounts for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. And that's not all. The world's meat diet also contributes to water quality and land use issues too. As a way of helping to offset this, a meatless Monday campaign has begun.

In addition to the environmental benefits, eating a plant based diet is said to reduce the risk of heart disease, help you maintain a healthy weight and improve the overall quality of your diet—as long as healthy, meat-free alternatives are included in your diet. It can also reduce your risk of chronic preventable conditions like cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity.

According to www.meatlessmonday.com, many people have jumped aboard the campaign! Some of the latest folks to take action are at Northern Kentucky University, which has begun offering Meatless Monday offerings in the cafeterias to encourage healthy eating across campus. The News Record, the Independent Student News Organization of the University of Cincinnati, which is championing Meatless Monday to all students.

Although some in the meat industry have been quick to state that meat is a much-needed part of the daily diet, the campaign seems to be gaining force. You and your student can join the movement by pledging to go meatless on one or more Mondays, starting a blog or website to advance this mission and/or signing up to receive weekly recipes via Eater's Digest (www.meatlessmonday.com). Those who sign up receive the information they need to start each week with healthy, environmentally-friendly meat-free alternatives.

For more information about the Meatless Mondays campaign, head to www.meatlessmonday.com/. You'll find nutritional facts, recipes to share and a host of other recipes if you desire to get on board.

After-Holiday Money Matters

Once the holidays are over, many of us find ourselves contending with bills and money woes. If your student is one of those people, here are some tips to share:

- ▲ Write out a budget for the remainder of the academic year so he can plan effectively
- ▲ Look into campus job possibilities—every bit helps!
- ▲ Now that she knows her general expenses, talk with her about what she can cut out to save money
- ▲ Consider what the summer will bring now—will he need to work or can he take classes?—in order for your student to stay financially viable



Get Moving into 2010!

Many experts say that you should get between 75 and 150 minutes of physical activity each week, depending on how vigorous your effort is to stay in shape. Yet the ability to take all that time out of your busy schedule to hit the gym may not be realistic for you—or your student.

It is possible for college students to incorporate exercise into their busy schedules, though—and you can help your student learn how to do this!



Incorporating Activity

Encourage your student to include both aerobic and muscle strengthening activities into his daily routine. Some examples of moderate aerobic activity include biking on level ground and walking briskly. Some examples of vigorous activity include hiking uphill, fast dancing and swimming laps. Obviously, the more vigorous the activity, the better it is for you.

Tips to Get Moving

The great thing about physical activity, however, is that it doesn't have to be a big deal. Being healthy is all about moving. And this can be done in so many easy ways. Here are some tips you can share with your student for incorporating exercise into his regular routine without having to turn his entire life upside down:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- For every hour you spend sitting in front of the computer, spend five minutes doing simple calisthenics right next to your desk. How many jumping jacks can you do in five minutes?

- Skip dessert and take a walk around your building after dinner.



- Grab a Frisbee and a friend and have some guaranteed fun.
- Offer to help rake leaves in the fall, shovel snow in the winter and cultivate the garden in the spring.
- Ride your bike to the local stores, instead of taking a car or public transportation.
- Exercise while you watch TV. Jog in place or do sit-ups during those annoying commercials.
- Make time to walk across campus to the different buildings where you have classes instead of relying on the campus shuttle.

- Clean your room vigorously once a week."
- Crank up some tunes and have a five-minute dance party before leaving for dinner.
- Hand-deliver those notes of appreciation rather than emailing them.

- Sweep the halls and stairwells yourself rather than notifying maintenance.
- Do subtle leg lifts or isometrics while you sit in a lecture or ride in a car (as a passenger).
- Purposefully use restrooms that are the farthest distance from your room.

It's easy to incorporate simple, extra movement into everyday doings. So, help your student figure out what he can do to keep moving this year!

Add Some Healthy Snacks into the Mix!

As you well know, exercise isn't all it takes to live a healthy lifestyle. Here are some healthy snacks you can encourage your student to grab while he's on the go:

- Wraps made with whole-wheat tortillas, containing either lean cold cuts or low fat cream cheese topped with veggie slices. Even the PB and J is healthier in a wheat wrap!
- Whole grain bagels topped with cream cheese-vegetable spread
- Boiled eggs
- Baby carrots, celery sticks or apple slices with dips made from low fat sour cream, yogurt or peanut butter
- Unsweetened applesauce or fruit without added sugar
- Drinkable yogurt
- Cheese sticks



Celebrate International Creativity Month!

Did you know that you can train your brain to be creative? It's no surprise that encouraging creativity will make you more creative. So...start encouraging! In honor of International Creativity Month this month, encourages your student to think in different ways and to tap into new areas of her brain! Some tips you can offer include:



- Remember that creativity comes in many forms, whether it's identifying a quicker route to take to class, figuring out how to combine foods in the dining hall to eat healthier or developing a new song on Garage Band. It's all creative thinking in action!
- Pay attention to your creative thoughts. The subconscious mind tends to give you more of what you pay attention to. So, if you ignore the creative aspects of your life, you're actually telling your mind that you don't think they are important.
- Consciously note when you are creative. Look for opportunities to be creative and you'll notice that you are more creative than you think you are.
- Challenge assumptions. Who says things have to be a certain way? Find ways to come up with creative solutions and ideas when you can.
- Use the "random presentation" technique, where you randomly choose anything around you and ask yourself how it is connected to a problem you are trying to solve.
- Come up with creative solutions by asking yourself and others, "What if it was...?" The "it" is the problem in

this case. Insert any idea generating words (which are usually adjectives) into the "... " and see what you can come up with!

- Emphasize process rather than product. When you do this, you often end up somewhere you didn't expect!

- Post inspirational messages and images all around your workspace. If you feel good, you'll be more likely to give your mind permission to think in new ways.

It's so much easier to be creative than most people think. Get your student's creative juices flowing with these tips.

Educate Students on Steering Clear of Substance-Related Sexual Assaults

While we know you aren't in the business of advocating partying, we know that you are in the business of trying to keep your student safe if she chooses to engage in these activities. As students stay cooped up this winter season, it's likely that some may decide to enjoy an alcoholic beverage or two. Encourage them to take these simple steps to keep themselves and their friends safe from substance-related sexual assaults:

- Do not leave beverages unattended.
- Do not take any beverages, including alcohol, from someone you do not know well and trust.
- At a bar or club, accept drinks only from the bartender, waiter or waitress. If someone offers to buy you a drink, go with the person to the bar and watch the bartender make your drink.
- Do not accept open container drinks from anyone. (This includes punch bowls.)
- Be alert to the behavior of friends. Anyone appearing disproportionately intoxicated in relation to the amount of alcohol they have consumed may have consumed a tampered beverage.
- If you start to feel strange or unusually intoxicated, seek help from a friend. A stranger who offers to help you or escort you from the event could be someone who's slipped you a drug and plans to do you harm.
- Anyone who suspects that they have ingested a tampered drink or sedative-like substance should be taken to a hospital emergency room or should call 911 for an ambulance. Be sure to ask for a urine sample and try to keep a sample of the beverage for analysis.
- Party in groups, never leave a party without accounting for those you came with and always pre-plan a safe ride home.
- Be careful whom you invite back to your room.

Do whatever you can to get this important message to your student in a way that will make her hear it. Many substance-related sexual assaults can be avoided with smart, proactive behavior.

