

September 2007

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:

September

- ▲ exploration and acknowledgement of personal values
- ▲ long distance relationship strain
- ▲ feelings of loneliness and homesickness may increase
- ▲ 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 their time
- ▲ searching for a sense of belonging

7 Ways to Support Your Student at College While Fostering Self-Responsibility

1 Help Students Make Their Own Decisions. When you say, "Well, what do you think you should do?" during a phone conversation, you're offering your support but, instead of jumping in with fool-proof advice, you're helping your student figure out her own answer.

2 Trust Your Student. And let him know that you do. He'll likely feel more confident, supported and able to stand up for what he believes as a result.

3 Communicate without Over Communicating. Check in with each other a few times each week via email or phone. However, don't feel like you need to touch base every day—there needs to be some space in between so your student can gain a sense of independence.

4 Don't Solve Everything for Them. The tendency to jump in and "take care of things" is natural. Yet, students need to start learning to do these things for themselves. So, try not to fix things—instead, ask questions like "What steps have you taken so far?" to help your student take the lead and take self-responsibility.

5 Stay Involved. Just because your student goes off to college doesn't mean she stops needing your input.

Your involvement is essential to her success. Be interested, ask questions without prying too much and listen to what she has to say.

6 Let Go a Bit. You can't know where your student is every hour of the day—nor should you have to keep track of that. Instead of quizzing him about where he's been, ask more general questions like "Have you gone anywhere interesting lately?" or "How have you been spending your free time?" so he can share without feeling put on the spot.

7 Keep Them in the Loop. Even though your student is building a new life at college, it doesn't mean she should be cut off from what's happening back home. Share a balance of news to keep the connection strong—and to make sure your student focuses on people besides just him or herself, too!

It's a time for transition as you and your student determine how to stay connected. Keep the lines of communication open, let mistakes be made and encourage your student to make decisions for himself. It's all part of the process, especially in this important first month.



Academic Organization

A Key to Your Student's Success

It's important for students to remember that their number one priority is their academic life on campus. As they begin juggling pressures related to roommates, friends, classes, athletic commitments, family and more, a gentle reminder may help keep them on track.

Once students get off track, they quickly find themselves in a place where they can no longer offer attention to *anything* other than their books. Getting—and keeping—themselves organized from the beginning will help them avoid academic crunches this year.

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Keeping Study Supplies Organized

Is your student studying somewhere other than his desk in his room? If so, encourage him to create a “study sack” of sorts, where he keeps everything he might need in one place—ready to go whenever he needs it.

Some things to keep in a study sack include:

- ✓ dictionary
- ✓ thesaurus
- ✓ highlighters
- ✓ pens/pencils
- ✓ iPod
- ✓ late night study snacks
- ✓ lined paper
- ✓ calculator
- ✓ CDs/flash drive
- ✓ Post-it notes
- ✓ language translation dictionaries and tools

Helping Students Take Responsibility for Their Space

The truth is that the college campus is now your student's home away from home. It's important that your student recognize her role in respecting this environment. This means being accountable for her behaviors and treating the facilities with care.

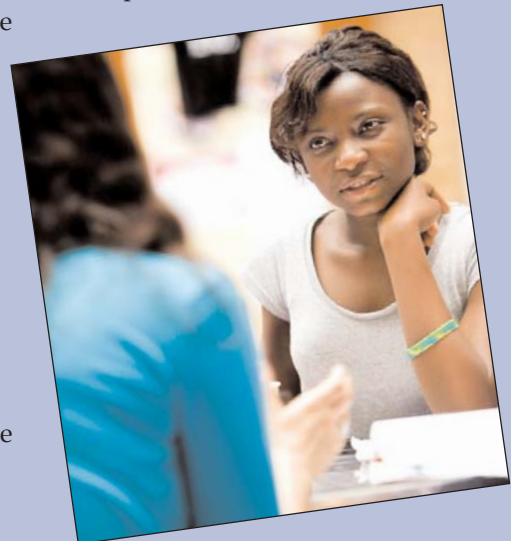
Of course, there's another part of taking responsibility: holding others accountable for their actions. This is really difficult for some students to do. Unfortunately, it only takes one to ruin it for everyone—and generally, this one individual's destructive behaviors can impact a number of others.

Remind your student that she's a member of a team in making sure that the campus environment stays safe, positive, clean and, most importantly, a place she can be proud of. If she becomes aware of someone who is contributing negatively to the campus environment, it is her responsibility to do something about it. Not doing so actually contributes to the problematic behavior.

If your student is confronted with a decision about holding herself—or someone else—accountable for destructive behaviors, encourage her to:

- Talk to the student who is demonstrating the behaviors and encourage him to stop or turn himself in to the appropriate folks.
- Talk to her resident assistant or another student leader.
- Take initiative by scheduling a meeting with the appropriate professional on campus, rather than waiting to be called in.
- When necessary, report the behaviors to campus security or public safety.

Everyone has a role in maintaining a positive campus community. It's yet another arena where helping your student learn self-responsibility can give her skills for a lifetime.



Some things to consider

Planning for Family Weekend

The invitation to campus has been issued: it's Family Weekend time! As you assess how to make this visit happen, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- ▲ **Talk with Your Student First.** See what he's thinking about the weekend and how you can share one another's time. It's best to talk it out before you arrive so there are no expectations going unsaid.
- ▲ **Make Reservations Now!** If you haven't already done so, find a place to stay, as things book up quickly. You might even ask your student to make dinner reservations if there's a place she'd like to take you.
- ▲ **Check the Schedule.** There are many things happening on campus so, plan your time together. Express an interest if there's something that you or other family members would really like to do.
- ▲ **See What Your Student Would Like to Do.** Chances are that your student is excited to show you *his* campus in his own way! Ask

him what he'd like to show you, what he'd like to do and what he's looking forward to. By letting him take the lead, you give him an opportunity to practice planning and decision making, while showing you his turf.

- ▲ **Keep Siblings in Mind.** Will there be enough to keep them occupied in a positive way? Do they have other commitments back home? Does your college student crave time with just you? Balance all of your family needs/wants to see what's doable.
- ▲ **Carve out the Kind of Time You Need.** Family Weekend is about campus happenings and is filled with lots of people. If you're craving intimate one-on-one time with your student, make sure that you let that be known. Maybe you can grab lunch together at a quiet spot or take a walk at the local park so you have some time to talk, away from the hubbub.
- ▲ **Be Ready to Meet People!** Your student will likely want to introduce you to her friends, roommates, faculty, people in her

classes, in her residence hall, those on her Intramurals team... it'll likely be a whirl of names and faces. During a quieter time with your student, ask about some of the people you've met. That will help clarify their place in her life—and it may help your memory a bit, too!

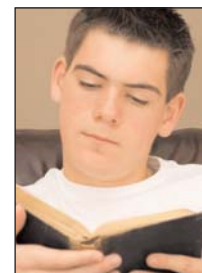
We're looking forward to having you with us! And, we suspect, your student is, too.

Academic Organization

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Encourage your student to:

- **Make a Schedule:** It may sound very basic, but completing a schedule grid will help your student map out weekly events and manage his time. Plus, it will help him keep track of academic obligations, while balancing them around other demands. Purchasing and maintaining a planner may also help your student stay organized.
- **Designate a Study Space:** Determining a study space early on will help your student develop positive study habits from the beginning. Encourage your student to select a comfortable space with proper lighting. The space, whether in your student's room or elsewhere, should be a place free from distractions. Creating a "study sack" or something similar, where your student keeps all of his study supplies in one place, might also help him stay organized.
- **Set Boundaries:** From the very beginning of the semester, your student should set boundaries between himself and his peers. Maintaining his personal space will ensure that he has enough uninterrupted time in his week to accomplish his studies.



Help your student get—and stay—academically organized with these simple tips.

A Family Weekend Checklist

Some practical things to discuss before you visit for Family Weekend:

- When do things begin and end?
- Is your student expecting that you'll bring certain things home with you (i.e. her summer clothes)? If so, you'll want to save space in the car!
- Where will you stay? Are siblings allowed to stay in the halls if they're of a certain age?
- What kind of accessibility is available for those needing special accommodations?

Thinking ahead can make the visit more enjoyable for all!



Support Resources Abound!

Your student has so many resources available to her as she heads off to college for the first time or returns for another year away. No matter what the need, there are professional folks available to help. Many professionals on campus are specifically trained to work with college students—their master's degree programs actually prepare them to recognize worrisome behaviors, respond to students' needs and provide programs designed to enhance students' experience outside of the classroom.

Here's a rundown of some of the folks available to assist your student (and even you, should the need arise!):

Public Safety—Safety professionals are available to help maintain a safe and secure campus, provide students and families with up-to-date information and statistics, and facilitate safety-training opportunities.

Student Life—Student affairs folks have numerous resources to assist students. Whether it's responding to difficult student behavior, helping to resolve a conflict or providing support in times of crisis, they are there to help.

Residence Life—If your student lives on campus, she will probably come into contact with residence life professionals. Some of these professionals actually live in the residence halls, available to assist students after normal workday hours. They work with the resident assistants in providing social and educational programs, maintaining the residence halls, and facilitating an environment conducive to personal and academic success.

Counseling—More and more students are coming to campus with psychological challenges. The counseling professionals on campus can

provide students with resources to address their concerns.

Judicial Officers—These folks work with disruptive students. Oftentimes, they also provide educational programs in a proactive effort to encourage students to make positive behavioral choices.

Career Services—As your student begins exploring majors of study, whether or not to study abroad,

summer internship opportunities, resume creation and interview preparation, the career center is where many resources are located. These folks are available to help students with a variety of academic-related issues.

Head to the campus webpage for a listing of these and other staff members available to assist your student. We listen to students and appreciate their initiative!

Belonging: A Potent Force in Students' Lives

As your student acclimates to campus, there's a powerful force at work. He wants to belong to something, whether it's a group, a community or a cause. This can lead many students to make great choices about how to spend their time and who to hang out with. Yet, it can also lead some students astray.

Belonging might pan out in a variety of ways, including...

- a student finding a group of hallmates to have dinner with most nights
- a student pledging a fraternity or sorority
- a student attending a hall council or student government meeting to see what the issues are
- a student inviting others over to play video games in his room
- a student participating in risky drinking behavior because she is invited out by other students
- a student joining a campus organization that he is interested in
- a student attending a program sponsored by her RA
- a student accepting an invitation to watch "Grey's Anatomy" with new friends
- a student doing someone else's academic work for them because it's a way to be accepted
- a student finding a workout partner
- a student participating in vandalism or other negative behaviors because that's what the people he's spending time with tend to do
- a student doing community service with others

Talk with your student about where he's finding his sense of belonging. Many times, you may be able to tell, just by virtue of the people and events he discusses. Positive belonging is a glorious thing, something that we all need to experience. And negative belonging can be rectified through communication and care.

