



a newsletter for parents & families



February 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:

- Difficulty getting into study mode
- Things become routine... school finally becomes home
- Pressure to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
- Cabin fever and burnout
- Valentine's Day depression if not dating
- Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety
- Spring break planning underway
- Sophomores facing decisions about declaring a major

What Lies Ahead

Decisions your student may be facing

Your student will likely be in decision-making mode these next few months, as she seeks opportunities and determines intentional directions for her life. Here are some key decisions on her plate...

Choosing a Major. If your student is in her second year, she'll likely have to declare a major. This involves looking at her learning, her future goals, classes she has enjoyed and more. Remind her that her academic advisor, as well as other campus professionals, can help her make this type of decision.

Seeking Purposeful Summer Work. Finding work or an internship that allows your student to explore her major and interests is just *smart*. She'll need to make contacts, consult with folks in career services and beyond, create a resume and get her name out there. Making the most of the summer will help her be ahead of the pack.

Figuring Out Spring Break. How will your student spend her spring break? Being intentional with this chunk of time can definitely work to her benefit. Perhaps she'll go on a service trip, do informational interviews for summer jobs/internships, shadow someone in a profession that interests



her... Planning can ensure that she doesn't waste this valuable time!

Conversations, loving challenges and support can give your student added strength during this decision-heavy time of year.

How You Can Help

Ask Questions. They may include "What are you thinking about for the summer?" or "How can I help you weigh options for a major?"

Be a Sounding Board. Listen as your student bounces around possibilities.

Offer Support. Let your student know that you believe in her and are there to help.

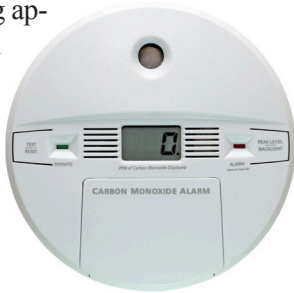


Being Carbon Monoxide Safe

We are right in the middle of heating season, as winter cocoons much of North America. That's why both on- and off-campus students need to be very aware of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that is produced when any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. If fuel-burning appliances are in good shape, the amount of CO is typically not hazardous.

Yet, if an appliance isn't working right or is being used incorrectly, CO can leak into living spaces and kill someone within minutes. Idling cars also produce CO that can kill. That's why accurate information is important to keep students safe.



Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

The signs of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- Headache
- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion

What to Do

If someone suspects he may have carbon monoxide poisoning, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that he:

- Get fresh air immediately by opening doors and windows, turning off combustion appliances and leaving the building
- Go to an emergency room and tell the doctor that he suspects carbon monoxide poisoning
- Be ready to answer questions about his symptoms and any ap-

Does your off-campus student have a carbon monoxide detector in his apartment? Do you have one at home? They aren't very expensive and can certainly save lives.

pliances being used in the house/room/building

Help your student become more aware of carbon monoxide poisoning and what to do in case of emergency. Also, encourage her to talk with her landlord to ensure that preventive measures (see box) are present in her living space.

Sources: www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm; www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/coftsht.html

Prevention

To prevent CO poisoning, the EPA suggests:

- ▶ Have fuel-burning appliances like furnaces, water heaters, gas stoves and dryers, fireplaces, wood stoves and gas/kerosene space heaters inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season.
- ▶ Make sure flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition and not blocked.
- ▶ Choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside, have them properly installed and maintain them according to manufacturer's instructions.
- ▶ Never heat your home using a gas oven, even for a short time.
- ▶ Don't idle the car in a garage, as fumes can build up very quickly in the garage and living area.
- ▶ Don't ignore symptoms.

FAFSA Deadlines

Here's a friendly reminder that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid — or the FAFSA — has deadlines for 2015-2016 that include...

- Online applications must be submitted by midnight Central Time, June 30, 2016
- Any corrections or updates must be submitted by midnight Central Time, Sept. 17, 2016
- Each state has a different deadline — go to <https://fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1516/pdf/Deadlines.pdf> for a comprehensive listing
- Each college may have a different deadline, too, so check with our institution about what they consider an application deadline — whether it's the date the institution receives your FAFSA or the date the FAFSA is processed

Talk with campus financial aid professionals with any specific questions you may have. They're more than willing to speak with both students and their parents/families.



Exploring Healthy Relationships with Your Student

February is Relationship Wellness Month. Talk with your student this month about what a healthy relationship looks like. It doesn't really matter if you're talking about the love of your student's life or a good friend. The basic tenets of healthy relationships are the same, regardless! Consider using this acronym to get the conversation started:

Signs that a Relationship is Healthy...

Vitality. In a healthy relationship, both individuals have the opportunity to grow, explore areas of interest to them and live life to the fullest.

Acceptance. It's nearly impossible to change another person. In a healthy relationship, both partners accept one another as they are.

Love. This goes without saying! But, it's important to note that love is intimacy, friendship and respect



— not possessiveness, obsession and manipulation.

Emotion. Relationships are emotional roller coasters, there's no doubt about it. If you didn't truly care about the person, the relationship wouldn't be hard work. Sometimes you'll face uphill battles and sometimes you'll feel like you're coasting downhill. This is all-important in building a strong, solid relationship.

Natural. In a healthy relationship, partners aren't pressured to do things they don't want to do. If something doesn't feel right, it's quite likely that it isn't. You should never feel intimidated or put down by the person who supposedly loves you.

Trust. It's much easier to be vulnerable when you trust someone wholeheartedly. And this vulnerability is so important in achieving an authentic relationship built on honesty and openness.

Interdependence. In a healthy relationship, part-

ners live and work together. Neither is dependent or independent from the other and both have their own positive identity.

Nourishing. A relationship should make deposits in your emotional bank account, not withdrawals. Healthy relationships are those that make you feel good about yourself.

Effervescence. If you're not feeling excited about your relationship, something is wrong. Although relationships are hard work and take a great deal of compromise, if you've tried this and you're still not feeling excited, it might be time to evaluate why you're feeling the way you are. This is okay! Sometimes you just need to take stock to realize all that you have. But sometimes, it may be time to part ways. If this is the case, stay true to yourself and be as honest as you can.

Now's the time to get the conversation started. Show your student that you care about his emotional well being by encouraging him to take a close look at the health of his relationships.

Happy Chinese New Year!

The Chinese New Year for 2015 begins on February 19 and ends 15 days later with the Lantern Festival. The Chinese calendar is close to 5,000 years old. It is made up of 12-year cycles, with each year named after an animal. People supposedly possess characteristics of the animal in the year of their birth. So, as the Year of the Sheep races in, you can use the following chart to determine where you and your student fall in the grand scheme of things. You just might learn something about one another!

- Year of the Tiger – born in 1974
- Year of the Rabbit – born in 1975

- Year of the Dragon – born in 1976
- Year of the Snake – born in 1977
- Year of the Horse – born in 1978
- Year of the Sheep – born in 1979
- Year of the Monkey – born in 1980
- Year of the Rooster – born in 1981
- Year of the Dog – born in 1982
- Year of the Pig – born in 1983

- Year of the Rat – born in 1984
 - Year of the Ox – born in 1985
- (Add or subtract 12 years from any of these dates when you don't see your birth date represented.)



Visit the Chinese Zodiac page at www.infoplease.com/calendar/chinese-zodiac.html to learn more about these 12 animals and the characteristics of each.

Sources: www.chinesenewyearday.com/ChineseNewYearDates.htm; www.infoplease.com/calendar/chinese-zodiac.html



Perfectionism

The quest to be “perfect” is something that many students may be feeling, especially as they embark on a new semester, new classes and new student leader challenges. Some of the traits that perfectionists may exhibit include...

Setting unrealistic or unachievable goals. Often perfectionists set goals that are so high and unrealistic that it is almost impossible for them to be successful.

Fear of failure. Perfectionists often measure their own self-worth or personal value with their failure to achieve goals.

“If you are a perfectionist, it is likely that you learned early in life that other people valued you because of how much you accomplished or achieved.”

— SUNY Potsdam’s online “Perfectionism” brochure

Fear of messing up or making mistakes. Because perfectionists equate their mistakes with failure, they organize their lives around avoiding mistakes and, thus, often miss opportunities for learning, growth and development.

All-or-none thinking. Perfectionists often believe that they are worthless EVEN if they have achieved

small successes or met parts of their goals along the way.

Overemphasis on “shoulds.” Perfectionists often live by rigid rules based upon what they believe they *should* do rather than considering their own needs and feelings.

Believing that others are easily successful. Most perfectionists believe that they are alone in daily struggles to meet expectations; they believe that others achieve success with minimal effort.

Imposing perfectionist ideals on others. Perfectionists tend to have high expectations of others and get frustrated when friends and colleagues are unable to meet those expectations. In typical perfectionist fashion, they believe that the things that are important to them should be just as important to everyone else.

These students are stressing themselves out, trying to meet the expectations of parents, families, friends, advisors... those whose opinions are important to them. Perfectionism is also about expecting a lot out of yourself – often, too much.

Sources: State University of New York at Potsdam, College Counseling Center, www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/counseling/selfhelp/upload/perfectionism-1.pdf; Adapted from an article by Susan Spangler, Higher Education Consultant

What Parents & Families Can Do

To help students overcome or at least work on their perfectionist tendencies, those who care about them can try the following...

Encourage students to set realistic, achievable goals. These should be based on students’ own wants and needs, plus what has been accomplished in the past. This will allow them to achieve a greater sense of self-esteem.

Help students prioritize goals. Encourage them to prioritize activities and responsibilities that are most important, and help them recognize that perfection is not something they can achieve in one area (let alone four or five).

Ask students to experiment with their standards for success. SUNY Potsdam’s “Perfectionism” brochure suggests that students choose an activity and, instead of aiming for 100% success, they try for 90%, 80% or even 60%. This activity helps students realize that the world doesn’t end when they are not perfect.

Understand process vs. product. Perfectionists often miss the boat on relationships because they are so focused on the final outcome of a project or activity. Thus, it is important to teach students to enjoy the *process* of doing an activity rather than solely focusing on the end result.

Provide students with the opportunity to learn from mistakes. When students approach you, depressed or withdrawn because they feel they have failed, it’s important to allow them to reflect on why they are feeling that way. Ask, “Have you set up impossible expectations of yourself in regard to this situation?” and “What can you do to prevent this from happening in the future?”

Help students understand that everyone has individual priorities. Perfectionists often expect others to buy into the perfectionist myth, too! Therefore, it is important to help students understand that each individual has their own priorities and goals.

Your care and concern go a long, long way when contending with perfectionism.