



a newsletter for parents & families



April 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:

- Some students lose their motivation for the final push
- Spring fever hits and problems arise as students become restless
- Anticipating the end of the year
- Frustration and confusion develop because of class registration
- Papers and exams pile up
- Summer job panic
- Feeling like they are no longer accountable for their actions – may turn to vandalism
- Sexual assault increases
- Concerns about moving home for the summer

Dealing with End-of-the-Year Conflict

At this time of year, nerves can fray and tempers can flare, as emotions and stress toy with our better judgment. To help your student deal positively with end-of-the-year conflict and anxiety, consider sharing these simple tips...

Check Your Reactions. Do you fly off the handle when your neighbor plays his music too loud? Do you yell at your roommate for waking you up? You're certainly entitled to your reactions. Just be sure you're not *overreacting* due to pent up stress. The old adage of counting to 10 before opening your mouth holds a lot of wisdom. You're less likely to say something you'll regret.

Don't Turn to Alcohol. Getting intoxicated sometimes feels like a quick fix, yet our reactions under the influence are rarely pretty. Anxiety and anger can come out in destructive ways like vandalism, getting in fights, and putting others and ourselves in dangerous positions when inhibitions are down.



Don't Burn Bridges. Sure, telling someone off who has been bugging you has a certain appeal. Yet, burning that bridge can easily backfire, as that person may know someone in a leadership position or a potential employer. And when what you've said is taken out of context in a retelling, *you* will look like the bad guy.

Preserve Relationships. If you do get upset and react badly, apologize quickly and genuinely. None of us are perfect and there are going to be some relationship missteps. Your actions after the fact can make a world of difference in preserving a relationship. Ignoring it is cowardly. Facing it is true.

Know Your Tipping Point

Chances are that you're in tune with issues that trigger your anger and push your buttons. So, avoid those conflicts when possible. And, if you can't, have a strategy that keeps you from exploding, whether it's taking a few deep breaths, walking away or telling yourself, "It's *not* worth it."



Spring Safety Smarts

This spring, as the weather warms and students may be inclined to “let loose,” here are some safety tips to help them keep in mind...

Alcohol Temptations. Drinking is often associated with warm weather fun. Yet, there’s certainly the underage issue for everyone to consider. Plus, for those who are of legal drinking age, they may be tempted to provide alcohol to underage students, putting them in a social host position that comes with multiple liability concerns. When it comes to alcohol, students need to be smart on many levels and keep their wits

Keeping a Clear Head

It’s important to keep a clear head by not being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs during spring celebrations. That leads to more enjoyment, the ability to look after friends and staying out of harm’s way.

about them so they don’t make bad decisions.

Warm Weather Smarts. It’s important to stay hydrated, to wear sunscreen, to don a hat for sun protection and to take it easy exertion-wise so heat stroke or heat exhaustion don’t strike. When doing a service project outside, playing sports or just hanging out, these warm weather issues can sneak up quickly as the sun beats down.

Crowd Hopping. Whether students are at a festival or a concert, it takes a heightened sense of awareness to stay safe in a crowd. Let them know that it’s important to keep their money/wallet in a front pocket so that it’s harder to lift. Leaving personal items of value to mark a spot – such as a phone in a sweatshirt pocket – is also asking for it to walk away. And keeping a clear head is key so your student is



prepared for any “What ifs?” that come with unpredictable crowds.

Trusting Strangers. Wise students look out for friends, don’t accept drinks from strangers, are careful about being alone with unknown people and don’t walk by themselves at night. Remind students to look out for one another and *not* put themselves in dangerous positions.

For all these warnings, it *is* possible for students to enjoy the spring as long as they stay smart, keep their heads and look out for one another.

The Final Stretch

Final papers, exams and stress are right around the corner. So how can you help your student make it through?

Be Understanding. Your student’s time will likely be crunched throughout the next month or so. Try to understand the fact that he may not be in touch as often and he may be a bit distracted. Academics will likely suck up a lot of his time as he wraps up the year.

Be Prepared. The end of the term can be an emotional time for many students as they say goodbye to friends, complete their involvements and more. So, be prepared to hear some melancholy in your student’s voice – and listen if she’s in the mood to talk.

Be Supportive. The stress of this final period can be compounded if students don’t feel like they’re getting support from their families. So, be vocal and demonstrative with your support to help him make it through. It can make a world of difference!

Be There. You never know if and when your student may reach out in need. Just be there when she does, to let her know you believe in her and her abilities. Sometimes that’s the most important support of all.



Stress-Busting Tips to Share

Your student is in the midst of a pretty stressful time, as the year winds to a close. Here are some stress-busting tips to share.

Think & Plan Ahead. Consider what you can do today to reduce your stress tomorrow. Maybe it's picking out your clothes the night before or planning your week's schedule in advance. Or it could involve organizing your computer desktop and filing papers quickly, so things are easy to find when you need them.

Steer Clear of Negative Talk. While it's easy to complain and dwell in negativity sometimes, it doesn't do a whole lot of good and can sap your energy. So, steer clear of those who want to engage in "complaint fests" and be the most positive person you can be.

Assess the Situation. What causes you stress? *Who* causes you stress? If you can't turn the situation or relationship into a positive experience, then commit to avoiding it and/or changing your attitude toward that person or situation.

Tap into Your Support System. It's easier to be less stressed if you surround yourself with supportive, positive people. Which friends and family members serve this purpose

for you? And how can you return the favor?

Just Say "No." It's easy to say "yes" too many times, and get overwhelmed in the process. Saying "no" is okay too. You can agree to help out or contribute to something, but only if you can fit it into your overall schedule. An occasional "no" can keep things on an even keel.

Laugh Regularly. Finding humor in everyday situations and taking every chance to laugh can do you an endless amount of good. They don't call laughter "internal jogging" for nothing! And your perspective is clearer and calmer when you're viewing some things through a filter of humor.

Use Nature as a Natural Stress Reliever. Take a stroll outside. Leave the library and do homework on a bench outdoors. Walk as you catch up with a friend. Just being outdoors will lower your stress and give you a new view on life.

Exercise and Eat Well. How you treat your body will determine how it responds when things aren't going well. Exercise regularly, choose a healthy diet and get enough sleep. If you do these things, your body will cope with stress much more effectively.

Don't Try to Control the Uncontrollable. Things we have

Want to Stay Stressed?

- Personalize all criticism
- Break off all friendships
- Eat anything you want
- Never exercise
- View everything as extreme
- Make more promises than you can keep
- Never ask for help
- Forget your sense of humor
- Become a workaholic
- Discard all time management skills
- Get very little sleep
- Break all boundaries
- Procrastinate
- Worry about things you can't change
- Set impossible standards
- View all challenges as problems
- Never take time off

no control over sometimes cause stress. So practice accepting some things as they are and moving on. Analyzing how or why something happened, that you couldn't and still can't change, will only increase stress levels.

Students don't need us to lecture them on releasing stress – that only causes more stress! Instead, gently remind your student of some simple stress relief techniques that can help her deal with specific issues. And if you see her turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms, like alcohol, other drugs and more, encourage her to check out the campus counseling center or to talk with another trusted adult on campus. Beating stress in healthy ways *is* possible.





Getting Ready for Move-Out

If your student lives on campus, here are some things for you all to start thinking about now in order to make a smooth transition.

Getting Info Early. Gathering checkout information from residence hall staff members by going to meetings and reading what's being distributed is your student's responsibility. So encourage her to ask questions.

Heading Home. How will your student get home? Discuss whether a van, his own vehicle, a borrowed truck or another mode will work best.

Storing Stuff. Since most campuses don't have summer storage space, consider where that rug, furniture and more will go. If your student is moving off campus next year, maybe he can get permission to store some stuff over the summer – it's better for him to ask now,



though, rather than expecting it'll be okay at the last minute. Or, he may need to rent a storage space in town.

Having Enough Containers. Encourage your student to gather boxes and bags now because they can be tough to come by at the very end of the year. Suitcases, duffel

bags, crates and plastic containers work well, too.

Starting to Pack. The packing should definitely start before move-out day in order to prevent stress, anxiety and a hectic scramble on that last day.

Cleaning Up. The dust bunnies and sticky residue will be plentiful, so prepare your student for the clean-up job ahead. And encourage him to clean as he goes. It's important to leave the room clean. Not only is leaving a mess disrespectful to the kind cleaning staff who have helped your student all year, there is also a hefty charge associated with room cleaning.

Throwing Stuff Out/Recycling. Students need to find out how to recycle and discard unwanted items so they can put those things in their proper place. Things can't just be left in the room, waiting for someone else to take care of them. So, make sure students talk to residence hall staff to get the scoop.

Move-out is an inevitable necessity that students can't ignore. It's better to get the information now and plan ahead for a smooth transition!

Making a Medical File

Helping students take responsibility for their health

Students can often get so caught up in their busy lives that they forget to make appointments to visit the dentist, doctor or other medical professionals. Unfortunately, this is a bad practice that can become a bad lifetime habit, as your student fails to make her well-being a priority.

So, consider working with her to create a medical file that contains the following:

- A list of up-to-date vaccinations
- What medications she is on

- Dates of last doctor visits
- Contact information, including websites, addresses and phone numbers, of medical professionals she has an established relationship with
- Health insurance ID numbers
- Any other details that could be helpful to know

Helping her create a file, complete with all the medical details, allows her to take stock of her medical history – and to take responsibility for what she has to do next as she takes these steps into adulthood. Here's to your student's health!

The Rise of Emotions

Saying goodbye on move-out day can get emotional for some students. It may hit them that they're leaving behind some great friends for the summer – or maybe longer. So, be prepared that move-out day won't just be about the packing and cleaning tasks. Your student may want to track down friends, spend some time and say good-bye in his own way.