

June 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:

- Missing friends at school and feeling like it'll be a long time until they see them again
- Transitioning back to life at home after being away all year (for students who go away to school)
- Adjusting to a new routine
- Working full-time instead of going to school full-time
- Anxiety about academics – feeling like they have a lot of ground to make up if they did poorly last semester
- Handling summer classes
- Reestablishing relationships with siblings, parents and friends
- Budgeting their money and saving for fall
- Looking toward next term and the changes that may occur

## 8 Ways for Students to Make the Most of Their Summer

Here are 8 suggestions for ways your student can maximize the summer months...

- 1. Job Shadow.** By spending time with someone who has a job that he is interested in, your student will gain some in-depth knowledge about the field.
- 2. Create a Habit.** During the school year, when multiple priorities are swirling around, it can be hard to commit to a positive habit. The summer is often a different story. That habit may be walking every day, meditating, journaling or something else that makes a positive difference in your student's life.
- 3. Read.** Students can read things that interest them, from the newspaper to BuzzFeed articles, and from library books to hobby magazines. All exercise the brain – and expand students' horizons.
- 4. Volunteer.** Reaching out to help the community does a couple of things: it provides leadership skills that can easily transfer



back to campus life in the fall, it provides purpose and, most of all, it offers assistance where there's a real area of need.

- 5. Get Creative.** What better time to get crafty, from painting a mural to taking up knitting. Not only do these new skills provide right-brain stretches, they also give students a sense of accomplishment.
- 6. Practice an Old Skill.** Did your student play the violin in high school or spike on the volleyball team? Sometimes getting back in touch with old areas of

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# Planning Ahead to Obtain Career Skills

As mentioned in the front-page article, planning ahead is a way for your student to make intentional strides toward his or her career goals. And what better time than the summer to do some planning!

Here are a few initial questions that can help your student direct his/her efforts...

- What are 3 skills to learn in the coming year that will help me succeed in the \_\_\_\_\_ career field I'm interested in?
- How can I intentionally work on these skills?
- Will it involve class work? Getting involved in a student organization? Creating an internship? Working with a professor? Vol-

## Sample Learning Opportunities

- If a student wants to learn marketing skills, he can join the student activities programming board to work on publicity
- If a student wants to learn how to get more comfortable speaking in public, she can see if there's a local community chapter of Toastmasters International
- If a student wants to learn more about healthy nutrition, he can see if the campus dining hall director or nutritionist will meet with him to talk about internship or job shadowing opportunities

unteering in the community? Job shadowing with an alumni? Or some other method?

- What can I do this summer to put these fall learning opportunities in place?

Sure, your student may not have pinpointed his or her exact career field of choice. That doesn't matter, though. Any learning opportunities will help your student make progress on the path of career exploration.

## Keeping Test Anxiety Under Control

During orientation, your student may need to take some tests. If he/she is prone to test anxiety, here are some anxiety control tips from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Counseling Center that can help...

- Distract yourself by reading a magazine or newspaper if waiting for the test to begin causes anxiety.
- Avoid coffee if you're prone to "caffeine jitters." It can make you feel light-headed and anxious.
- At the beginning of the exam, tell yourself, "I can be anxious later, now is the time to take the exam."
- Just focus on answering the questions, not on your grade or others' performances.
- Counter negative thoughts with other, more valid thoughts like, "I don't have to be perfect."
- Tense and relax muscles throughout your body; take a couple of slow deep breaths and try to maintain a positive attitude.
- If allowed, get a drink or go to the bathroom.
- Ask the instructor a question.
- Break your pencil lead – then go sharpen it.
- Think for a moment about the post-exam reward you promised yourself.
- Remember to breathe and quiet your mind.



Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Counseling Center, [www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu](http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu)



## Academic Prep to Do Better Next Year

If your student had a less-than-stellar academic term this past spring, he or she may be worried about the need to do better next time around. Here are some key considerations to share with your student to help him or her get more academically prepared...

### Explore Areas of Difficulty.

What are some of the reasons your student struggled last term? Did she get anxious about taking tests? Did she not keep up with reading? Might there be a hidden learning disability that is causing her difficulty? Or did she let her social life get in the way of academics? Exploring these possibilities now can help your student pinpoint the problem so she doesn't repeat her mistakes in the fall.

**Keep the Brain Limber.** Rather than taking a full brain rest, encourage your student to keep his mind active during the summer months. This can include regular reading, doing puzzles, learning new things, and listening to interesting TED talks or podcasts. Engaging in creative pursuits and testing his memory can also help (like seeing if he can name the U.S. state capitals or the people who lived on his floor last year). The brain needs stimulation so it's ready to work at full capacity in the fall!

**Check in with an Advisor.** Campuses don't shut down over the



summer. So, if your student is worried about her academic performance, encourage her to check in with her academic advisor or another trusted campus professional. This person can help her develop a pathway to success – starting now – so she doesn't have to stew over things all summer long.

**Prepare Ahead.** It also can't hurt for your student to contact professors that he's scheduled to have next term. He can ask them about ways to prepare for success in their classes, from reviewing information from a prerequisite class to reading some course materials. Responses may vary with this approach, yet it really can't hurt to ask! This also shows that your student is committed to his learning process.

Doing some intentional exploration and planning now can help set your student up for a more academically successful year ahead!

## Summer Conversation Topics

Here are some ways to connect with your student – through good, meaningful conversation! Topics might include...

- ▶ What classes your student is most looking forward to next term – and why
- ▶ How he's thinking about arranging his living space to make it more fun and effective
- ▶ The thing(s) she's glad she got involved in this year – and why
- ▶ Goals for next term, from applying for a campus job to an academic goal to trying out for a leadership position
- ▶ Ways you can both be more environmentally conscious
- ▶ What classes you would like to take if you were in college – and why
- ▶ The faculty or staff member your student was most inspired by – and why
- ▶ How his friends are spending the summer
- ▶ What she'd suggest to family or friends going to college, now that she has some experience under her belt
- ▶ Places around school that he'd like to explore, from hiking trails to surrounding towns
- ▶ What she's really looking forward to in the coming year

By tapping into these types of intentional discussion topics, you'll help your student reflect on his or her experiences while also connecting on a deeper level.

### Simple Brain Stretches

- ▶ Listen to TED Talks while working out
- ▶ Do a crossword or Sudoku puzzle
- ▶ Explain directions to someone else
- ▶ Recall who lived on your hall and in which room last year
- ▶ Learn something new, like 20 words in a different language
- ▶ Write a letter
- ▶ Organize something



# Missing School Friends & Staying Connected from Afar

Summer can be so lonnnnnnnng! Your student may be missing her college friends terribly and feeling like it'll be forever until she can see them again. You can help by offering some suggestions for connecting from afar...

**Host a Virtual Birthday Party.** If a friend is celebrating a summer birthday, your student can organize a virtual birthday party. This could involve everyone bombarding that person with birthday mail, singing together during a Facetime or Skype date, and everyone texting her with photos of the most delicious-looking birthday cakes *ever!*



**Send Postcards.** It may feel “old-fashioned” yet as your family travels somewhere this summer, mailing out postcards to school friends can be a different way to connect. Real mail shows that you're thinking of someone – and

who doesn't love that feeling? Give your student a book of postcard stamps to get started.

**Read the Same Book.** Having a common experience, even if they're not in the same place, can help friends feel more connected. Reading the same book will give them something to talk about that has meaning.

**Pick Up the Phone.** Sometimes texting or Facebooking doesn't have the same feel as hearing someone's voice. So, encourage your student to call friends or Facetime with them now and then. That instant connection can remind them all of the warmth of being in one another's presence.

## Making the Most of Orientation

Orientation is an important time to gather information and get more comfortable with campus, for both you and your student. Some simple tips can help parents and family members make the most of this experience...

- Ask questions – we welcome them!
- Listen intently
- Meet faculty and staff members
- Participate in activities
- Get to know other parents and family members
- Take notes
- Attend a variety of sessions
- Give your student space
- Handle concerns with care and dignity
- Take tours and get into buildings
- Stay hydrated and healthy in the heat
- Have paperwork in place
- Soak it all in!

We look forward to seeing you!

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## 8 Ways for Students to Make the Most of Their Summer

competence can renew a student's confidence in the here and now.

7. **Spend Time.** Nurturing important relationships with family and friends does *everyone* some good!
8. **Plan Ahead.** What skills would your student like to gain next year? And what classes, involvements, volunteer opportunities and more can help her gain those skills? Planning ahead will make her approach intentional and, likely, successful.

The summer months offer your student great opportunities for growth. Yet, they fly by quickly, so encourage your student to dig in today!