



August 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 as the school year gets started:

- ➔ Getting adjusted to college life for the first time (or once again)—feelings of loneliness and homesickness
- ➔ Worries about being able to handle academic pressures and schedule
- ➔ Anxiety about perceived restrictions of campus policies
- ➔ Roommate adjustments & conflicts
- ➔ Money management struggles
- ➔ Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
- ➔ International students may feel confusion, vulnerability and lack of advocacy
- ➔ Lack of social life and lots of questions about how to get involved in new activities

Making the Big Move

Tips for Moving Your Student into the Residence Hall

Move in day can be a stressful time for families. The logistics can be difficult to plan out.

Add emotions and nerves to the mix and tensions are certain to run high. Here are some tips to make move in day go as smoothly as possible:

- ▲ **Keep in mind the emotions everyone may be feeling.** While they aren't an excuse for rudeness or disrespectful interactions, they can be at the root of a verbal or non-verbal exchange. For first-time students, they are probably feeling excitement, anxiety and even a little bit of fear. Returning students may be feeling a "too cool" attitude or a "let's just get this over with" kind of mentality. Family members may be dealing with a whole host of adjustment issues of their own.
- ▲ **Pay attention to the directions you were provided.** Be sure to show up at your assigned time and to the designated location. Follow all campus directional signs and listen to the staff members on hand. It creates undue stress and confusion when families



ignore a well-thought out process designed to make move-in the smoothest process possible.

- ▲ **Give yourself time.** You'll want to have enough time to help your student unpack and arrange a little. Leave the final decorating and organization to your student and her roommate, though. You don't want to be too pushy. Besides, figuring this out from the get-go is part of what college is all about. You may want to take time to get to know your student's roommate and her family too. Planning to grab a bite to eat after both students are settled could serve as a good transition for everyone.
- ▲ **Be patient.** Lots of people will be trying to do the same thing all at once. A friendly hello, door held or patient pause will go a long way.
- ▲ **Plan for the weather.** Be sure you know what to expect. If it's supposed to be hot, bring lots of water so you stay hydrated. If it's supposed to rain, buy some cheap plastic ponchos, load everything up in plastic garbage bags, and grin and bear it.

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The Pros and Cons of Cars on Campus

This is a biggie. Having a car on campus is *very* important to some students. Everyone's family circumstances differ. If you are exploring the possibility of your student having a car on campus, consider the following possible pros and cons:

Pros

- increases student's ability to get to an off-campus job or internship
- student is able to travel home more frequently and easily
- going into town to buy supplies or groceries is less of a hassle

- student can get away from campus to study or take a break
- opportunities to get involved in the community become more accessible

Cons

- the availability of parking
- cost of gas remains high
- student may travel home too frequently and lose out on campus experiences
- costs associated with car upkeep, including oil changes and maintenance, can eat into student's meager funds
- college students are considered "higher risk" drivers, therefore

insurance rates may increase and strict regulations may be placed on them as drivers

- students who have cars are often pressured by students who don't to drive them places or loan out their car

If the possibility exists for your student to have a car on campus, consider the pros and cons carefully. Many students go through their college years without a car on campus. Not having access to a car can help them learn to problem solve, be creative and explore public transportation in ways they never would have otherwise.

Interested Yet Not Intrusive

Just because your student is heading off to school, it doesn't mean that she no longer needs you in her life. It's important for you to be involved—it's actually quite essential to her success!

The key is to be interested, without being too intrusive. You know the drill...you've been the parent of a teenager for a number of years now!

Here's a quick recap, though, since we all need reminders every now and again:

- don't make conversations feel like "quizzes"
- ask your student what she is *learning* in class, instead of always focusing on grades
- if your student mentions a new person's name, casually ask about that person ("So, Andrew is a friend from...?") rather than drilling for details
- balance your communication by not always making it about your student—share what's happening in your life too
- don't call or email constantly—there needs to be a healthy distance
- ask what your student is getting involved in and what interests her so far—let her share her enthusiasm!

Over the next few weeks, your student may rebuff your efforts to help or even just to talk about school. Don't worry...it's probably just nerves. You can still be supportive by being ready to listen. Pay attention to cues—and use these openings wisely. Your student is sure to value and appreciate your efforts, even if she doesn't demonstrate it right away. Plus, you'll feel more confident as you send your student off to start another chapter in her life.



Commuter Connections

Do you have a commuter student getting ready for the academic year? Commuting to campus brings with it unique challenges. Commuters juggle a great deal, including making a place for themselves academically and socially on campus and handling outside commitments such as family or work.

You can help your commuter student find his place this year by:

- ▲ **Encouraging him to get involved on campus.** Many commuter students just go to class and leave, without checking out campus activities or events. No one says that commuter students can't take advantage of these aspects of the campus community too.
- ▲ **Allowing him some flexibility with his schedule.** Things may come up. He may get invited to go with friends to the campus dining hall or to stay after class with a study group. Try not to worry if you don't see

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Keeping Up the Cash Flow

College is a great time to start practicing smart money habits. Many college students experience more freedom in college than they've ever had before. Unfortunately, in exercising this freedom, some college students go a little too far by mismanaging their funds or spending money they don't have.



Talk with your student about money before he heads off to school this semester. Here are some questions to get the conversation started:

- \$ How much money are you planning on taking with you from your savings?
 - \$ What are you planning on spending your money on throughout the semester?
 - \$ Are you expecting to make any money this semester, and if so, approximately how much?
 - \$ Have you figured out a budget for yourself?
 - \$ What free on-campus opportunities can you take advantage of (i.e. pre-paid fees for student activities or recreation facilities, meal plan options, phone service, etc.)?
 - \$ Are there ways in which we can help offset costs?
- Having this conversation now will help your student begin thinking about the reality of his financial situation. Your student might make mistakes! But, hopefully a little bit of foresight and planning will help your student make smart money decisions this year.

Commuter Connections

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a lot of your student. Making campus connections is important.

- ▲ Considering adapting household rules. If your student lives at home, consider the possibility of adapting curfew, chore, visitor and meal rules so your student has more freedom.



- ▲ Providing quiet, uninterrupted time for studying.

College is much more demanding than high school. Make sure your student has a comfortable and quiet place to study where he won't be interrupted. He may need to study a couple of hours a night.

Tips for Moving

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- ▲ Prepare youngsters for the day. They will likely be very excited—at the beginning—but the day will wear on them. You won't want to feel pressured to leave because they are antsy or complaining they are bored. Pack along a surprise activity pack or purchase a disposable camera for them to record the day's events. Don't forget snacks too. A cranky, hungry—and bored—kid is sure to add stress to the day.

A Cool Move-in Day Idea.

Put together a surprise gift box for your college student and leave it in his room. Make sure you unpack it and place it somewhere where he won't find it until after you leave (under the bed or in a closet is a good bet).

Here are some fun things you could include:

- ★ copy of a favorite childhood story book
- ★ warm throw blanket (if you knit or crochet it, even better!)
- ★ mix CD
- ★ pre-recorded video with messages from family and friends
- ★ some fun magazines
- ★ nice lotion or soap
- ★ a drawing from a younger sibling or friend
- ★ candy or another special treat from a hometown shop
- ★ deck of cards
- ★ a book of inspirational quotes
- ★ family pictures
- ★ stuffed animal or cozy pillow
- ★ a blank journal or photo album

What you put in the box really doesn't matter—it's your thought and the surprise that counts! Even the most excited student will feel some pangs of homesickness after you leave. The box will be a welcome reminder that you care and love your student.



Struggles with Self-esteem

Many experts suggest that self-esteem, or self-respect, is something that eludes many college students. Does your student believe in herself? For those young people who don't believe in themselves, adjusting to college life can be really difficult. Since each year of college brings with it new challenges and dynamics, self-esteem issues can rear their head at the start of every academic year.



Some of the signs of a healthy self-esteem include:

- ▲ feeling competent in one's ability to cope with life's ever-changing situations
- ▲ setting realistic short-range and long-range goals
- ▲ trusting one's judgment, opinions and ideas in most matters
- ▲ knowing where to get help when the need arises
- ▲ feeling capable of making sound, responsible choices
- ▲ handling change when it occurs
- ▲ being open to both positive and negative feedback
- ▲ being willing to take risks
- ▲ maintaining a positive, energetic and assertive attitude (generally)

Experiencing a dip in self-esteem from time to time is normal. In fact, it's expected. These dips keep us grounded and help us continually evaluate who we are and where we are going in the future. If your student seems unusually anxious or negative during these next couple of months, you can help her adjust to the changes in her life by:

- ▲ **Offering praise, when appropriate.** But make sure it's based in reality and not just an attempt to make her feel better. She'll know if you don't really mean it.
- ▲ **Building on pre-existing strengths.** Focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses is one sure way to improve your self-esteem. By remembering what she is good at, and trying to improve those skills even more, her competence – and confidence—will continue to grow.
- ▲ **Helping her to avoid making comparisons with others.** There is no

use in comparing ourselves to others. Encourage your student to focus on her efforts and making herself the very best she can be.

- ▲ **Encouraging her to try new things.** You never know when hidden talents will surface and college is just the place to discover them! There is no other time when your student will have such a wide array of opportunities right at her fingertips. Suggest she check out clubs, organizations and lectures if she thinks they may be of interest to her.

FERPA Facts

What is FERPA anyway? FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of a student's educational records. It applies to schools receiving funds through a U.S. Department of Education program. Once a student turns 18 years of age, information from her student record can't be shared with others—including parents—unless she gives written permission. The law does allow an institution to disclose records without consent, however, in some cases. These include health and safety emergencies.

So what does this really mean?

Unless it's a health and safety emergency, your student is expected to take responsibility for her life. There are many people on campus who will help her out, but ultimately college is a time for learning many "life lessons." We expect students to take responsibility for:

- their behavioral choices
- respecting rules and policies
- personal integrity and care
- developing healthy study, eating and sleep habits
- seeking assistance when needed
- being a positive member of the campus community

Help your student out. Instead of jumping in to "fix" things when they happen, talk your student through the process of solving the problem herself. Encourage her to use the resources at her disposal and seek assistance from campus professionals when needed. She'll learn a great deal that will help her function as a young professional down the road!

