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New Student Issues

Students preparing to dive into college for the first time may have a lot of things on their minds, such as:

- ▲ Feeling sad about leaving established friends and family at home
- ▲ Concern about issues of “belonging” and finding a comfortable place on campus
- ▲ Excitement coupled with anxiety about making a fresh start
- ▲ Worry about academics being “hard” and beyond their abilities
- ▲ Thinking about what type of first impression they’ll make
- ▲ Concern about roommates and housing (if living on campus)
- ▲ Wondering what to pack and what to leave at home since space will be limited
- ▲ Possibly transitioning into a long-distance relationship or deciding to end a current relationship
- ▲ Financial worries—wondering if they’ll be able to make enough during the summer and also how much they’ll need to work once school begins
- ▲ What to expect during orientation and what questions to ask so they’ll be prepared for the fall semester

Making the Most of Your Orientation Experience

You’ll soon have the opportunity to go through a parent/family orientation program.

Here are some suggestions for making the most of this gateway experience:

Prepare Questions. Think about what you really want to know, not just what you “should” find out. Interested in how students can apply their learning in practical settings? Ask about internships, jobs and co-op opportunities. Want to know whom your student can turn to if he’s having learning difficulties? Ask the question. Thinking ahead will help you determine what’s truly important to you and your student.

Don’t be Shy. Sitting back and listening to presenters and panels makes good sense. However, if you have additional questions, don’t hesitate to ask. Whether it’s in a group setting or one-on-one after a presentation, your concerns deserve attention. And no question is a “dumb” one!

Listen and Take Notes. Jot some notes as various presenters bombard you with information. That way, you can read through them when you get home and clear your head. It’s easy to say, “I’ll remember that point or that contact info” yet the sheer vol-



ume of information you are offered during orientation makes remembering everything from memory very difficult.

Get to Know Other Parents/Family Members. Orientation is an excellent time to mix and mingle with others who are going through the same thing that you are: sending your student to college. Develop informal support structures and compare notes with other parents and family members.

Give Your Student Some Space. This is his first campus experience as a matriculated student so it’s important that he learn to navigate on his own. Give him space to meet people, to ask his own questions and to take charge of his college life. Starting off with a dose of self-responsibility during orientation

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Questions to Consider

Commuter Concerns. What meal plans are available for commuters? How can they get involved in campus life, even though they don't live there? What is the parking situation like?

Residence Hall Life. What are students allowed to bring and what is against policy? Do the mattresses require extra long sheets? What staff members are available in the halls?

Academics. What services are available to students with learning disabilities? How do professors' office hours work? If a student is feeling behind, what can he/she do?

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Determine what is important to YOU.

will set a positive tone for the rest of his time on campus.

Take Tours. It may be hot and you may be tired. Yet nothing beats seeing something with your own eyes. So, consider taking tours that are offered. You'll get to see academic buildings, residence halls, community spaces and much more. Then,

when your student starts talking about these places during the fall semester, you'll be able to accurately picture her in her surroundings.

Keep Yourself Healthy. Orientation sessions often happen on some of the hottest days of the year. Drink water, stay cool and pace yourself. And if you have special needs, please ask—there are many people here who will be glad to help you!

Don't Cause a Scene. If you cause a ruckus during a session or raise your voice at an administrator, not only will you cause an unpleasant scene, you'll also make things harder for your student by embarrassing him. We all know how to handle concerns with care and dignity. Make that your mode of operation so that people will respond to you better and so that your student doesn't have to suffer.

Have Paperwork in Place. Work with your student to make sure that you're bringing all the required paperwork to campus for orientation. Go through a checklist ahead of time so that you both feel prepared to dive into orientation without worry!

Orientation can be an exciting time for both you and your student. Make the most of it!

Commencement Wisdom

"We live in a world in which the simple, the generous, the enjoyable, the completely present, above all the simply yourself sometimes seem as out of reach as the moon. Do not be fooled. That is not because anyone has found a better way in the millennia since the Tao was written. It is because too often we are people shadowed by fear. The ultimate act of bravery does not take place on a battlefield. It takes place in your heart, when you have the courage to honor your character, your intellect, your inclinations and yes, your soul by listening to its clear voice of direction instead of following the muddled messages of a timid world."

~ From Author Anna Quindlen's May 2005 Commencement Address at Barnard College (NY)

Insurance Tips: Take Stock of the Stuff

Before your student heads to college in the fall:

- Have him take stock of his belongings, says the Missouri Department of Insurance.
- Have him estimate and itemize the dollar value of what he'll have with him at college.
- Then, encourage him to update this list annually and keep it in a safe place, such as a safe deposit box or at your house.

When your student gets to school in the fall:

- Encourage her to ask about an "Operation ID"-type program, often run by the campus public safety department in conjunction with residence life. They provide an engraver so students can engrave an ID number (NOT their social security number!) on the back of major items and then keep a list on file with public safety. This allows public safety to help students even more effectively should any of their engraved items be stolen.

Sources: Missouri Department of Insurance, <http://insurance.mo.gov>; Texas Department of Insurance, www.tdi.state.tx.us; Kansas Insurance Department, www.ksinsurance.org; National Association of Insurance Commissioners, www.naic.org

Being a Coach & Encourager

One of the key roles that parents and family members can play during their student's time at school is that of coach. This is different from doing things for your student or setting him off completely on his own. It's a more nurturing, developmental approach that can have great results!

Coaching Strategies

- **Listen to your student talk about her college vision**—What is she looking forward to, what does she hope to accomplish, what will equal success in her eyes?
- **Inspire him to unlock his true potential**—Encourage self-exploration, trying different classes, meeting new people and getting involved so he can explore what fits best—You can ask leading questions to help this process along
- **Encourage her to take action**—This is something she needs to do on her own; no one else can do it for her
- **Empower him**—Some students may not fully know where to begin, so adapt a “Yes, you can!”

Providing Encouragement

As students dig into their college life, they may sometimes bite off more than they can chew. That can manifest itself with an overwhelming class load, too many hours at work or taking on student leadership positions in bulk.

One of the roles of a coach is to encourage students to “add rungs to their ladder.” They don't need to take huge steps all the time—sometimes they can add smaller steps in between to help them get where they want to go.

attitude and talk with him about things he can do, one step at a time

- **Solicit suggestions**—Instead of putting words (and actions) in your student's mouth, let her contribute to the process too—it's important that she learn to trust her own ideas and instincts, rather than purely leaning on those of others
- **Provide tools**—Do your own campus research so you can point out resources he can tap into, from the career center (it's not just for seniors anymore!) to the wellness center to the study abroad office
- **Encourage creativity**—There's nothing saying that your student has to do things the same old way! Encourage her to tap into creative ideas, ways of thought, problem-solving strategies and more.
- **Energize him**—We all need a boost now and then to keep us

going. Provide him with the energy that comes from having someone recognize a job well done or root him on in person, when possible. He'll feed off your energy!

- **Push her toward the journey**—While it's easy to get derailed from our path sometimes, having a coach to push us along and provide encouragement makes it easier. Talk with your student about how she's feeling being on a certain path and try not to make demands that she stay on that path if it's not feeling right. There are plenty of variations that might fit her more effectively.
- **Encourage reflection**—As you coach your student through her college process, make sure that both of you set time aside to reflect on how things are going. The process of doing without reflection isn't half as satisfactory, or effective!

The Art of Active Listening

Active listening is a skill that you and your student will find quite handy as you navigate the next steps of your relationship. According to the Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado, active listening is “a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding.”

Some key elements include:

- ▲ **Give Your Full Attention.** Keep your eyes and focus on the person speaking to you.
- ▲ **Be in the Moment.** Don't start developing your response while the speaker is still finishing her thoughts.
- ▲ **Limit Advice.** Sometimes people just need to process through things to figure it out on their own, while you listen affirmingly.
- ▲ **Don't Interrupt.** Interruptions make it about you rather than the person you're supposed to be listening to!

Here's to a year of good listening and communication!

Top 10 Ways Students Can Keep Their Brains in Shape This Summer

And Parent/Families Can Join Them!

Keeping the brain in shape is a year-round pursuit. Yet, many students don't use their brains in the same, knowledge-seeking manner as they do during the regular school year. So, here are some simple ways for them to jog that noggin'—and for you and your family to join in the action!

1. **Play word and number games like Sudoku and Scrabble.** And do crossword puzzles and word jumbles. Thinking logically to accomplish these tasks stretches the brain muscles.
2. **Eat fish** and other brain foods!
3. **Test your memory recall after being in a large group setting,** whether it's a church picnic or a family reunion. See how many names and relationships you can remember.
4. **Read a book with multiple characters** that you have to work at keeping straight. Then, discuss the story and the character's interactions with others who are reading the same thing.
5. **Listen to public radio in the morning** or watch world news in the evening to keep in touch with what's happening in the world.
6. **Learn something new** on the computer.
7. **Move around**—an active body contributes to a healthy mind!

8. **Write something regularly,** whether it's a letter, an email or a journal entry, just to keep those skills in practice.

9. **Pick up a newspaper or news magazine** when waiting to get your oil changed or your hair cut. Those few minutes reading substantial "stuff" can keep the brain from getting rusty.

10. **And, take risks to learn something new.** If there's a local writer's institute, go listen to the authors who are speaking. If there's a local farmer's market, buy a vegetable you haven't tried before and look up a good recipe for it.

Learning is all around and keeping the brain limber and ready for the fall semester is often much easier than you think!

Summer Sun Safety

On a lovely day, there is nothing more enjoyable than getting out into the warm sunshine and feeling those delicious rays on your skin. Yet, students need to be reminded that those same rays can do harm to their skin, too. Here are some quick tips from the American Academy of Dermatology to help you and your student prevent long-term skin damage and still have fun in the sun this summer!

- Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Use sunscreens that have a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or greater.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours when outdoors, especially if you are swimming or sweating.
- Wear a wide, broad-brimmed hat to protect your face from direct rays.
- Wear sunglasses with UV protective lenses.
- If you are going to be outdoors for any length of time, stay in the shade whenever possible. Take an umbrella to the beach.
- Avoid reflective surfaces, which can reflect up to 85 percent of the sun's damaging rays.
- Be especially careful if you have fair skin with blond, red or light-brown hair.

