

Potsdam
THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

May 2011

Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are things your student may be experiencing this month:

- ▲ Anxiety due to realizations that the year is ending and final exams are about to occur
- ▲ Senior panic about jobs, finances, etc.
- ▲ First-year students are feeling somewhat confident because they feel that they have made it through the first year (almost!)
- ▲ Good feelings are evident as summer is near
- ▲ Lots of cramming, studying and wrapping things up academically
- ▲ End of the year socialization, sometimes involving dangerous drinking
- ▲ Packing and checking out
- ▲ Saying goodbye to important people and putting closure on the year

Handling Goodbyes, Emotions and All

It's time for students to say goodbye—to beloved friends who may be graduating or transferring, to a residence hall community they really felt they belonged to or to an academic year that treated them well. Or maybe your student is graduating and saying goodbye to his college years.

These goodbyes can be emotional for many students, and they can show it in multiple ways:

- Crying or getting choked up more regularly
- Trying to cram in as much social time with people as possible
- Avoiding those they'll be missing
- Engaging in high-risk drinking to numb the pain
- Keeping themselves busy so they don't have to face the emotions

Helping Your Student

Everyone has their own way of dealing with the emotion of goodbyes. You can help your student deal with this difficult time by:

- Encouraging her to make time with friends before it's too late—so she doesn't have any regrets
- Listening when he wants to talk about what he's feeling



- Helping her look forward to what the summer and next year will bring
- Staying tuned in to his emotions—and offering to talk whenever he likes
- Speaking up if you hear her dealing with emotions in unhealthy ways

Also be prepared if you're picking your student up after the school year has ended. He'll likely want to spend time saying goodbye to folks when you may be ready to drive home. Compromise and communicate in this situation. Unfinished business in the arena of goodbyes can be damaging and grounds for regret. It's important for students to feel like they've wrapped up their important relationships in the best way possible.



Getting Used to One Another Again

It may be time for your student to come live under your roof again this summer. And that's going to take some adjustment all the way around!

How do you get used to one another again so you can enjoy this summer reconnection? Here are some tips:

- Determine what ground rules you feel strongly about and share those with your student in a discussion-oriented way, rather than just mandating them
- Ask her what she feels strongly about and see if you can come to a compromise that feels good to all
- Be prepared for your student to keep different hours than you may be used to
- Work together to plan a few simple things you can do together within the first few weeks—whether it's going out to lunch, visiting a friend, cooking a meal or playing basketball—to reconnect and get used to spending time together
- Also realize that your student will likely want to spend a good deal of time with local friends and that he may want to go visit college friends, too
- Discuss major issues, such as car usage and curfews and chores, right off the bat so they don't come up during a "heat of the moment" moment!
- Listen to what your student has on her mind, as she likely has new ideas and values and perspectives as a result of everything she has learned this year
- Try not to be offended when your student disagrees with you—he may just be testing out

some of his newfound knowledge and ideas—and try to engage in meaningful discussion instead of an argument

- Don't over-rely on tech tools to communicate—get some face-to-face time in there instead of

relying solely on texts, Facebook and Tweets

It takes love, understanding, patience and listening to reconnect for the summer. And you can do it. Good luck!

An End-of-Year Assessment: Helping Students Move Ahead

The end of the year is a good time for reflection and your student may be ripe for just such self-awareness. Once she's done with classes and exams, you can help her take a look at where she is now that the academic year is over and where she'd like to be when it comes to becoming her genuine self. For instance, how does she feel about herself when it comes to things such as:

- ▲ Serving others
- ▲ Being a learner
- ▲ Knowing what she values
- ▲ Embracing diversity
- ▲ Treatment of others
- ▲ Work ethic
- ▲ Being a leader
- ▲ Being a friend
- ▲ Being a sibling
- ▲ Being a son/daughter
- ▲ Being in a relationship
- ▲ Developing into someone interested in ____ (a hobby, interest, passion)
- ▲ Being an informed citizen

Add other topics that are important to your student, too. Examining these traits now allows your student to set some summer goals for the areas she'd like to focus on. Perhaps she's interested in serving others on a more regular basis by steadily volunteering for the same agency. Or maybe she wants to work on becoming a more informed citizen by reading the newspaper on a daily basis.

Whatever the case may be, taking an honest look at herself now and then setting goals can help your student work toward becoming her most genuine self this summer.

Summer Goals

Ask your student: "What two topics would you like to intentionally work on throughout the summer? How will you go about doing this? And how can I support you along the way?"

A Summer Curriculum

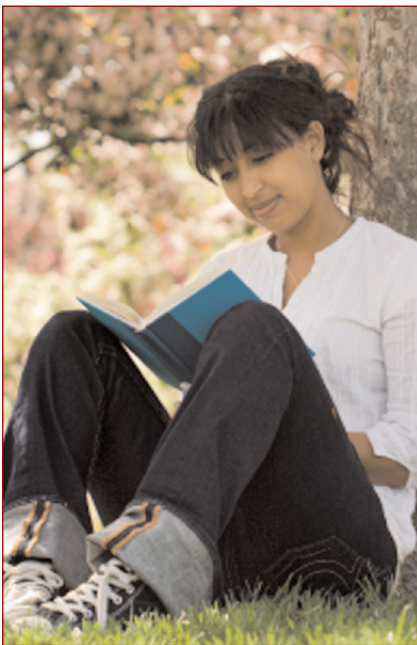
Giving pursuits & passions some attention

Summertime can provide a chance for you and your student to focus on what you want to learn. You'll be busy with other tasks, for sure, yet it's worth carving out time to focus on your own enrichment as well. Perhaps it's time to start putting together your personal "summer curriculum."

This can be a list of things you want to learn, passions to pursue, books to read and more. Ready? Here are some questions to consider as you and your student prepare:

Identify Your Cause. What is a cause that interests you, that you know something about and that you'd like to become better informed about? Maybe it's a global issue like the lack of potable drinking water in many countries. Or maybe it's something more local, like working with the cooperative extension on a youth community garden. Do some research and make an inquiry. Dip your toe in to see how you might get involved.

Pursue a Passion. We all have something that we love to do



Sample Summer Curriculum

Dear Self,

Here are some areas that deserve your attention this summer:

- ▲ Learn to use iMovie to create a slideshow for my family reunion
- ▲ Plan an adventure to go tubing on the Delaware River with Jake and Molly
- ▲ Read the Doris Kearns Goodwin book *Team of Rivals* to see how Lincoln surrounded himself with different opinions to the benefit of his presidency
- ▲ Identify how to get more involved with the local domestic violence shelter to advocate for women's and children's rights
- ▲ Pursue my passion for dancing by signing up for a continuing ed Zumba class at the local high school

Love,

Me

but that we don't devote enough time to. Perhaps it's scrapbooking, cycling, playing the piano or doing improv comedy. Figure out one passion that you'll make a priority this summer—and how you'll go about doing that. It might involve starting a monthly scrapbooking circle or joining a local cycling group to add some structure to the pursuit.

Pick a Book. What book has been sitting on your nightstand, untouched because you're dog-tired at the end of each day? First, move it from your nightstand so it's in a more public place where you'll see it several times a day, like your coffee table or a book shelf. And then take it with you when you go outside on a nice summer day. If you're not into reading as much, head to the library to get a free DVD of an interesting documentary or biography. You'll be feeding your brain, no matter what!

Plan an Adventure. Sometimes we just need to get out of our daily rut to kick-start our brains and our energy. And a change of

scenery often does the trick. So, grab a friend and go check out some sights. Chances are there are interesting things to do, historical sites to visit and adventures to be had within an hour or two of your home. Put it on the calendar now so you're more inclined to just go!

Learn Something New. Want to learn conversational Spanish for a trip to Mexico? Interested in figuring out how to grow awesome tomatoes? Or are you intrigued by presidential history? Pick something new to learn that will make you feel more competent and confident. Practicing to become a lifelong learner is a skill that will never fail you!

The summer curriculum that you and your student develop can include all of these pursuits or just a few—whatever feels like an organized, healthy approach to you. Just be sure to give you and your interests some attention this summer. You deserve it!



Prescription Meds: Illegal Use During Finals Time

About 15.2 million Americans aged 12 and older had taken a prescription pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant or sedative for non-medical purposes at least once when surveyed in 2008, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Included in that number are college students who are “pharming”—or taking prescription meds illegally—for purposes such as staying awake longer, being able to pull all-nighters, self-medicating for anxiety or depression, enhancing their sports stamina or ramping up to enjoy the “high.”

Prescription drug abuse means taking a prescription medication that is not prescribed for you, or taking it for reasons or in dosages other than as prescribed, says the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Commonly abused classes of prescription medications include:

- **Opioids (for pain)**—including drugs such as Vicodin, OxyContin, Dilaudid, Demerol and Lomotil
- **Central Nervous System Depressants (for anxiety and sleep disorders)**—including barbiturates such as Nembutal, and benzodiazepines such as Valium and Xanax
- **Stimulants (for ADHD, obesity and narcolepsy)**—including drugs such as Dexedrine, Ritalin, Concerta and Adderall

Long-term use of opioids or central nervous system depressants can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Opioids can produce drowsiness, constipation and, depending on the amount taken, can depress breathing. Central nervous system depressants slow down brain function; if combined with other medications that cause

drowsiness or with alcohol, heart rate and respiration can slow down dangerously. Taken repeatedly or in high doses, stimulants can cause anxiety, paranoia, dangerously high body temperatures, irregular heart-beat or seizures.

This is all good to be aware of during this final push, when students may be tempted to take prescription medications illegally to pull all-nighters and study hard. It's not good for them, it's dangerous and good grades aren't worth the physical risk.

Keeping Debit & ATM Cards Safe

When it comes to debit or ATM cards, the Federal Trade Commission offers these tips to keep them safe:

- Keep your PIN separate from your cards, don't give it out and don't make it easy to guess.
- Don't put your account number anywhere visible and be cautious about giving it out over the phone.
- Draw a line through blank spaces on charge or debit slips above the total so the amount can't be changed. And don't sign a blank charge or debit slip.
- Cut through the account number on old cards.
- Compare monthly statements to your receipts promptly and report any discrepancies right away.
- Carry only those cards that you anticipate you'll need.
- Check your account activity, especially if you bank online, by comparing current balances and withdrawals/transfers to those you've recorded. Report any problems immediately to your card issuer.

As the summer spending season approaches, consider sharing these reminders with your student so he can keep his cards—and his money—safe.

A Bigger World

A simple question can help you and your student communicate about some things that really matter: “What is making your world bigger these days?”

For some students, the answer may be meeting people from different cultures or attending diverse activities on campus. Others may have their worlds enhanced by performing community service or championing social justice causes. Or maybe it's something your student learned in a class that makes him feel the world has opened up a bit.

Your student may also have nothing to share when it comes to this topic. If so, that's a good time to discuss options he can pursue, from study abroad possibilities to language classes to starting a volunteer gig this summer. Even one action can make the world exponentially larger!

Consider sharing the types of things that make your world bigger, too. A conversation, an experience... there are many things, big and small, that help us grow. By sharing this type of discussion with your student, both of you will have an opportunity to experience a bigger world, too.