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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:

- ▲ Exploration and acknowledgement of personal values
- ▲ Long distance relationship strain
- ▲ Feelings of loneliness and homesickness may increase
- ▲ A desire to feel connected to campus
- ▲ Roommate adjustments
- ▲ Experimentation with alcohol and other drugs
- ▲ Getting acclimated to a new type of academics
- ▲ Figuring out how to get organized and manage his time
- ▲ Searching for a sense of belonging

Taking Some of the Stress Out of College

Hopefully your student headed off to school this semester brimming with excitement and high expectations. And, of course, a bit of trepidation too. As your student adjusts or readjusts to the reality of college life this month, you can expect a range of emotions.

Here's how you can help take some of the stress out of the transition:

- **Listen.** Every student adjusts to college differently. If your student is struggling with something that seems unimportant to you, try to keep your feelings out of the equation. Help your student put things into perspective, but validate her concerns and worries too.
- **Encourage your student to be realistic.** For many students, the more realistic they are, the easier time they have meeting the challenges that come their way. For example, if your student knows that it's likely that she will be missing home quite a bit over the next few weeks, she may be able to face the sadness head on.
- **Reassure your student that his feelings are common.** Your student might feel like he's the only one who isn't fitting in, making new

friends or getting along with his roommate like a best pal, but he isn't. Let him know that even students who don't appear to be struggling likely are in some way.

- **Remind your student to stay true to herself.** Most college students do some experimenting and almost all try on different personalities as they explore new values and ways of doing things. This is normal. What doesn't have to be normal, however, is your student feeling like she has to change herself in order to fit in. Kindly reiterate this message to your student—it never gets old.
- **Talk about campus resources.** Dig through those orientation papers or peruse the school's website to remind yourself about the resources available on campus. Then, remind your student. Let him know that there are people he can go to for help—with his roommate, his classes, his relationships, his athletics and more.

The first six weeks or so of college, especially for a first-year student, are always a transition. As your student adjusts, provide as much support and encouragement as you can.



Help Your Student Steer Clear of Sexting

An increasingly popular form of communication is “sexting,” or sending sexually explicit images and messages to another person. Although many say sexting is done just for fun, it can come with a hefty felony charge, believe it or not.

Students have sent inappropriate photos of their peers to others via cell phone or email, causing extensive emotional and psychological damage to those involved. And in some cases, students have actually sent nude photos of themselves to their peers. There have been cases where sexting has resulted in individuals—even teenagers—being charged with possession or distribution of child pornography and being required to register as a sex offender.

You can share the following tips with your student regarding sexting:

- ▲ Remember that there are no guarantees that the text and photos you share will remain private. This can cause you serious problems when trying to apply for jobs, scholarships and more.
- ▲ Keep in mind that nothing sent is truly anonymous. And even if the sender decides to delete a message or post, others may already have passed it on or posted it.
- ▲ Don't take—or send—any pictures of anyone with your phone or webcam without their permission. This is about a person's right to privacy—and you having good manners.
- ▲ Use your common sense. If the information you are about to send was about you, would you want the world to see it or know about it? If not, don't share it!
- ▲ Know that sending nude photos of a minor is illegal. Even teenagers have been charged with producing or distributing child pornog-

raphy—simply as a result of forwarding these types of photos to friends or classmates. And, keeping them on your phone is a crime too—it's called possession.

- ▲ If you know who sent the photo, let the person know that doing so is against the law. Although confronting the friend might be tough, you'll actually be doing the person a huge favor. Think about what will happen if the police get involved.

Laws about sexting vary from state to state, but it's important to have this conversation with your

Students and Sexting

Nearly four out of five college students have received sexually explicit images via text messaging, and more than half have received sexually suggestive messages, according to a recent study of 204 students conducted by University of Rhode Island faculty. Who's sending these messages? Two-thirds of the group surveyed admitted to sending racy emails and texts. Researchers say the results support larger technological trends.

Source: slate.com, 7/25/11

student regardless. Should your student be concerned about himself or others, encourage him to talk with a campus professional such as a student affairs staff member, a counselor, a faculty advisor or a member of campus police.

Sources: www.connectsafely.org;
www.netSMARTZ.org/index.aspx

An Apple a Day...

It's National Fruit and Veggies Month! For many students, eating enough fruits and veggies can be the toughest part of maintaining their daily diet. Busy schedules that don't always allow for a visit to the cafeteria, trying to grab items that can be eaten on the go and newfound freedom all play into the mix. Gently remind your student about the importance of consuming enough fruits and veggies. And if she is struggling with doing so, offer her some tips and suggestions such as these:

- Stick some small plastic bags in your backpack and grab some veggies from the salad bar on your way out of the dining hall. Pay for them and then eat them for a quick snack later or the next day.
- Melt a chocolate bar in the common area microwave and dip some fruit into it for a tasty late-night snack. Or dip some veggies into peanut butter.
- Eat a salad every time you dine in the cafeteria for dinner—no matter what.
- When you order a sandwich for breakfast or lunch, pick at least two veggies to include on it. Eat them on the side if you don't like them on the actual sandwich.

Fueling up with healthy foods now will help your student in fighting off colds and sickness later on.



Offering Advice on Academic Organization

It's important for students to remember that their number one priority is their academic

life on campus. As they begin juggling pressures related to roommates, friends, classes, athletic commitments, family and more, a gentle

reminder may help keep them on track.

Once students get off track, they quickly find themselves in a place where they can no longer offer attention to anything other than their books. Getting—and keeping—themselves organized from the beginning will help them avoid academic crunches this year.

Encourage your student to:

- ▲ **Make a Schedule:** It may sound very basic, but completing a schedule grid will help your student map out the weekly events and manage his time. Plus, it will help him keep track of academic obligations, while balancing them around other demands. Purchasing and maintaining a planner may also help your student stay organized.
 - ▲ **Designate a Study Space:** Determining a study space early on will help your student develop positive study habits from the beginning. Encourage your student to select a comfortable space with proper lighting. The space, whether in your student's room or elsewhere, should be a place free from distractions. Creating a "study sack" or something similar, where your student keeps all of his study supplies in one place, might also help him stay organized.
 - ▲ **Set Boundaries:** From the very beginning of the semester, your student should set boundaries between himself and his peers. Maintaining his personal space will ensure that he has enough uninterrupted time in the week to accomplish his studies.
- Help your student get—and stay—academically organized with these simple tips.

Fostering Self-Responsibility in Your Student

Going away to college can be a big transition for some students. Here are seven ways you can foster self-responsibility in your student:

1. **Help Your Student Make His Own Decisions.** When you say, "Well, what do you think you should do?" during a phone conversation, you're offering your support but, instead of jumping in with foolproof advice, you're helping your student figure out his own answer.
2. **Trust Your Student.** And let her know that you do. She'll likely feel more confident, supported and able to stand up for what she believes as a result.
3. **Communicate without Over Communicating.** Check in with each other a few times each week via email or phone. However, don't feel like you need to touch base every day—there needs to be some space in between so your student can gain a sense of independence.
4. **Don't Solve Everything for Him.** The tendency to jump in and "take care of things" is natural. Yet, students need to start learning to do these things for themselves. So, try not to fix things—instead, ask questions like "What steps have you taken so far?" to help your student take the lead and take self-responsibility.
5. **Stay Involved.** Just because your student goes off to college doesn't mean she stops needing your input. Your involvement is essential to her success. Be interested, ask questions without prying too much and listen to what she has to say.
6. **Let Go a Bit.** You can't know where your student is every hour of the day—nor should you have to keep track of that. Instead of quizzing him about where he's been, ask more general questions like "Have you gone anyplace interesting lately?" or "How have you been spending your free time?" so he can share without feeling put on the spot.
7. **Keep Her in the Loop.** Even though your student is building a new life at college, it doesn't mean she should be cut off from what's happening back home. Share a balance of news to keep the connection strong—and to make sure your student focuses on people besides just herself, too!

It's a time for transition as you and your student determine how to stay connected. Keep the lines of communication open, let mistakes be made and encourage your student to make decisions for himself. It's all part of the process, especially in this important first month.



Facebook: To Connect or Not to Connect?

Determining whether or not to join Facebook is a tough question for parents.

Although more and more adults are using Facebook to stay connected to peers, learn about sales and events happening at favorite shops, and



Learn the Dates

There are some key dates in your student's and your family's life that are important to know. Find out when the following are set to occur in order to plan more effectively:

Parent/Family Weekend

Fall/Thanksgiving Break

Finals Week

December Holidays Break

Opening Day/Classes Begin

Spring Break

Move-out Day

post photos for family and friends, some hesitate for fear of what their children may think. This can be an especially tough struggle for parents of college students.

Do you really want to know how your student is spending his weekend? Or how much time he is spending on Facebook, instead of socially with others face-to-face or hitting the books? Here are some pros and cons to consider as you make the decision for yourself:

Pros of Connecting to Your Student on Facebook:

- Facebook offers a quick and easy way to stay connected with your student. You can see pictures of his friends, view campus through his eyes, and easily communicate back and forth. Plus, you can post pics and news from home for your student to see too.
- You can get a sense for how your student is faring at school. Is he meeting and connecting with new people? Is he posting information about cool things he's done or places he is planning on going?
- You can relate to your student when she talks about friends. You'll see posts and pics on Facebook that will put a name and a face to the conversation.
- Many students set up their Facebook accounts to receive notifications on their phones or other Mobile Internet Devices. So, if you need to quickly get in touch with your student, posting a message on Facebook offers an additional means of quick communication.

- Your presence on your student's "friend" list may help keep her and her peers in check. This can help her in maintaining a good impression on Facebook as she gets ready for job searching and more.

Cons of Connecting with Your Student on Facebook:

- Your student might feel like you are curtailing her privacy.
- You'll see what he and his friends are really up to. There's no escaping photos and comments—you'll know how he is spending his weekend, how much or how little he is studying, and more than you ever wanted to know about his collegiate experience.
- You might misinterpret something that is posted on Facebook, leading you to worry unnecessarily.
- It takes time to keep up with Facebook. Maintaining a Facebook account is one more thing to add to your already busy schedule.
- Connecting on Facebook could take the place of connecting on the phone. And there's nothing like hearing your student's voice and knowing she is safe and happy.

Talk with your student about your Facebook connection. See how she feels about it. You might be surprised! And if you do connect, be careful about what you post. Just as your student will be keeping herself in check, you should be careful about what you post for all the world to see too. Embarrassing your student certainly won't help the cause for staying connected.

