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Housing

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September 2010

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 their time
- ▲ searching for a sense of belonging

Helping Students Deal with Homesickness

As you work through the transition of having your student in college, keep in mind that your student is transitioning too. For some students, part of that transition is homesickness. When the initial excitement and newness of the new year wears off, some students commonly long for home and the familiarity of their old routine. You can help your student cope with these feelings by offering him the following suggestions:

- **Acknowledge your feelings and worries.** Once you've identified the feelings, it can be easier to address them.
- **Take advantage of the resources available on campus.** There are so many people available to help! Resident assistants, counselors and others are prepared to help students who are homesick or lonely. Don't be afraid to tap into them...you won't be the first.
- **Get involved.** If you sit and think about what you are missing at home, you are also missing what you could be doing on campus. This is a lose-lose situation! Trying new things and meeting new people is one of the best ways to combat loneliness.

- **Call home or communicate in other ways with those who matter to you.** Although it's important for you to develop some independence, staying connected is a great way to feel supported as you grow during your collegiate journey.



When Your Student Needs Something More

How do you know if your student is experiencing a normal bout of homesickness or if she is really struggling in a way that might require some additional support? Here are some signs that might signal that your student is severely homesick:

- **He finds reasons to call.** If your student starts contacting you much more often than normal, it could mean that he is looking for reasons to talk to you.
- **She's not getting involved.** If you aren't hearing your student talk about co-curricular activities or she keeps giving excuses as to

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Homesickness

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why she isn't getting involved, she could be holing up in her room and not connecting with her peers.

- **He's becoming more and more dependent.** Is your student asking you to handle simple tasks that he normally handles on his own or should be handling on his own now that he is in college? It's one thing for a student to call for some advice or to talk through some possibilities, but it's another for a student to call home to ask someone to handle something he should handle.
- **She keeps getting sick.** Sometimes, homesickness can manifest itself in physical symptoms such as headaches, insomnia, nausea or fatigue. If your student is experiencing these symptoms with regularity, it could mean more than poor habits.
- **He is getting poor grades.** Severe homesickness can make it really difficult for a student to concentrate on his schoolwork. Talk with your student about his grades, what he is learning in his classes and what he is enjoying about his academic pursuits.

If you believe your student is severely homesick, encourage him to visit the campus counseling center. A professional can help him work through his feelings and get him on the right track.

Most of all, you can help your student by reassuring him that by accepting his life in college, he's not giving up his life at home. He can have both...it just looks different. Send him some things to remind him of home, make sure he knows you are thinking about him and help him feel confident about the months ahead.

Some information adapted from Helium.com.

How NOT to Get in a Car with an Impaired Person: Help Your Student Stay Safe

Thousands of lives are saved each year by both designated drivers and by those who make smart decisions about not getting in the car with an impaired driver. Unfortunately, many more lives are needlessly lost by those who make poor choices. As you well know, each of these deaths is a tragedy that affects many others who are left to grieve the loss.

Here are some tips you can share with students on how not to get in a car with a person under the influence:

- **Plan ahead** whenever you are going to socialize at an event where alcohol is in the mix by choosing a designated driver.
- **Collect everyone's car keys at the start of an event** so there is no chance that someone will drive under the influence. Give them all to the designated driver to hold for safe keeping.
- **Be sure you have the phone numbers for local cab companies and/or bus and shuttle schedules** in your wallet. Print them out so you always have them with you.
- **Try to avoid a confrontation** or embarrassing the person under the influence.
- **Practice saying "no."** Be firm in what you feel is the right thing to do and say no to riding with an impaired driver. Also, have some stock excuses ready.
- **Don't be afraid to call for help.** Under no circumstance should you get in the car with someone under the influence. You can always call a campus professional or campus police if you need assistance.



Remind your student that, no matter what, he should stand firm in his decision not to get in the car of a driver who is under the influence. Doing his part to help ensure the roads are safe is the most responsible thing he can do.



Supporting Students' Choices (Even When You Don't Agree)

It can be one of the most difficult aspects of your role as a parent: supporting your student's choices, even when you don't agree with them. You may have been down a similar road before yourself and hope to encourage your student to take a different path. Or you may have some guesses for what will happen as a result of the decision, which the student can't clearly see for himself. Whatever the reason, you find yourself biting your tongue and hoping for the best.

Although part of your role clearly is to advise your student, even though he is in college, you also know how important it is for him to make his own choices and to experience his own successes and mistakes. So, when you clearly don't agree with your student's choice, what can you do? Here are a few suggestions:

- **Listen to your student and ask open-ended questions.** As you are engaging in conversation, be sure to reflect back a summary of what your student has shared. Utilizing this technique can help your student come to his own conclusions, without you having to offer an opinion.
- **Offer some of your life experience, by sharing personal stories.** As you share the stories, try to make some parallels to your student's experience. With some open and honest dialogue, you may be able to help your student benefit from what you are offering.
- **Be honest about your concerns.** But don't get discouraged if your student doesn't follow your advice. Ultimately, it's

his choice to make. The best you can do is offer your expertise and care.

Advise away this year, but try to keep yourself in check. As you well know as a parent, it can be easy to insert yourself and your values into a conversation if you don't. When in doubt, ask your student to consider three questions: How will your deci-

sion make you feel? How would you feel if your family knew about your decision? How would you feel if your decision was printed on the front page of the newspaper? These three value-loaded questions can help your student ensure that his decisions are in line with his values. And after all, this is what's most important.

Utilize Skype to Communicate with Your Student



Familiar with Skype? This no-cost service available through the Internet allows users to interact via email and webcam interface. More and more students are using it to connect with family and friends back home.

It's not unusual for families to communicate with their student daily these days, via Skype, text messaging, Facebook and cell phone. Although parents have gotten a bad rap for being so involved in their student's college experience, some researchers believe that using technology to regularly communicate with your student is not necessarily a bad thing. Barbara Hofer, a professor of psychology at Middlebury College (VT), told NorthJersey.com (8/9/10), "The positive aspect of [the frequent communications] is that this is a generation that has a very close relationship with their parents." She believes that fostering close ties and providing support as they learn and grow is appropriate, but that trying to make every decision for them is not. Check out the possibilities for communication via Skype at www.skype.com.

Social Networking, At It Again

In an interesting new study, researchers have determined that the compulsive use of Facebook, and other social networking sites, doesn't negatively impact students' GPAs.

According to the researchers at Northwestern University (IL), students—and parents—might want to think twice about blaming Facebook for plummeting grades. In fact, the researchers found that the use of social networking sites "has virtually no effect on academic performance when compared with other variables like gender, ethnic background or parental education" (Switched.com, 7/16/10).

It is certainly true that Facebook can distract students from studying or completing projects, but the researchers believe that the positive effects of being on Facebook may actually outweigh the negatives. "The positive relationship between web-use skills and GPA may illustrate that students who have better online skills can draw on their Internet savvy to aid in their schoolwork," the researchers said. Interesting, indeed.



10 Earth Friendly Tips You Can Share with Your Student

The majority of today's college students are eco-minded, very much wanting to reduce their impact on the environment. Here are 10 earth friendly tips you can share with your student to help her lead a greener lifestyle—and in some cases, save money too:

1. **Take notes on your computer.** Bring your laptop to class and take notes right on it. You'll save paper and since you probably type faster than you write, you might be able to take better notes too.
2. **Carry your own bottle with you, instead of repeatedly buying them.** Fill it up with water or another beverage of choice (just make sure to wash it out every once in awhile!).
3. **Watch your water usage.** It's easy to waste many gallons of water in our everyday lives, as we use toilets, showers, sinks and more. However, it's also pretty easy to save water by
 - not running the faucet when brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face
 - keeping drinking water in the fridge instead of running the faucet until it gets cold enough
 - taking quicker showers
4. **Clean green.** Instead of using toxic cleaners that can contribute to indoor air pollution and contaminate our water, check out



some of the natural-based cleaners instead. Or use natural household items to clean, such as baking soda, salt, lemon juice and vinegar. Find out how at www.thegreenguide.com/doc/120/diy.

5. **Be thrifty!** Head to yard sales and thrift stores to locate unique items that can round out your room décor and your wardrobe. You'll be amazed at what you can find!
6. **Utilize the Internet to stay connected.** You can find so many news sources online these days that you really don't have to buy a paper copy of the newspaper. You can also save paper by reading books online too.
7. **Buy Local.** Support the local economy and reduce the transportation impact of food and other items by buying local. Check out community gardens, farmer's markets and local businesses.
8. **Find out if you can submit assignments online, instead of printing them out.** You might be surprised at how many faculty members actually prefer this method!
9. **Take public transportation when you can and carpool when you can't.** Or, travel the "old-fashioned" way—on bike or by foot.
10. **Rent your textbooks, instead of buying them.** Or, find them used through the campus bookstore. These days, there are a lot of options—saving paper and money.

There's a Health App for Everything!

Having access to healthy tools and resources has never been easier. There's an iPhone app for just about everything, including health and nutrition! Here is just a sampling:

- ▲ **Mindful**—to track your food intake
- ▲ **FitReach**—to track your dietary, training and weight goals
- ▲ **Heart Rate Calculator**—to figure out your target heart rate
- ▲ **Steps**—to use your iPhone as a pedometer
- ▲ **Health and Fitness Mobile**—to view workout videos, apps and more
- ▲ **Trailguru**—to find trails in the great outdoors
- ▲ **Fast Food Calorie Counter**—to look up nutritional info for 49 top fast food restaurants
- ▲ **8h2o**—to track how many glasses of water you drink
- ▲ **iEyeExam**—to give yourself a quick eye exam
- ▲ **Massage Me**—to give yourself a massage using the iPhone's own vibration
- ▲ **Quitter**—to help you work to quit smoking
- ▲ **iFirstAid Lite**—to get an emergency first aid assistant

Have a student who's nervous about maintaining a healthy lifestyle while in college? Consider sharing these resources with them...or use them for yourself!

Source: www.uspharmd.com/blog/2009/100-fabulous-iphone-apps-for-your-health-and-fitness/

