



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

January 2021

Resolution Support in This New Year

New Year's resolutions are in the air this month, as students strive to improve upon last term's accomplishments. You can provide support while also helping students realistically set these types of goals for themselves.

For instance...

- **When your student says, "I'm going to pull all A's!"** you can instead discuss what academic improvements could look like. Perhaps it's being smart about getting assistance at the writing center so he can learn to become more comfortable with writing assignments. Or maybe it's using professors' office hours more

frequently so she's not getting behind in her classes.

- **When your student says, "I'm going to get super healthy this year"** you can instead more specifically discuss what that might entail. Do his eating habits need some tweaking in the area of fruits and vegetables? Does she need to get outside and get moving more? Is he spending too much time sitting still in front of devices, games and TV? By identifying a few specific goals, your student is bound to make a healthier lifestyle more of a reality!

- **When your student says, "I'm going to get really involved"** you can instead talk about what her passions are and *why* she wants to get involved. Is it to learn new things? Gain new skills? Meet new people? All of these are certainly valid reasons. It's just good for students to be in touch with their "whys" before plunging into new commitments so that they're gaining the most from their experiences.

That's the idea when it comes to resolutions. You can help your student take good intentions and turn them into true, realistic plans.

Making Resolutions Stick

Creating realistic resolutions – or goals – is one key step in making them stick. In addition, the National Institute of Health suggests...

- Set smaller goals on the way to your larger goal
- Develop an action plan with specific steps
- Think about how the change will enhance your life
- Set up a supportive environment
- Have a plan in place if you start to slip
- Make sure the goal is something meaningful to you, rather than doing it for other people

Source: [newsinhealth.nih.gov](https://www.newshealth.nih.gov)





Addressing Mental Health Stigma

Stigma can discourage people from getting the mental and emotional health help they need to lead fully functioning, fulfilled lives. It's a form of discrimination, just like what's used against people of different races, religions, appearances, cultures and more. So, what can you and your student do?

- Look beyond the labels associated with mental health issues.
- Avoid labeling people by their diagnoses.
- Treat them as individuals deserving dignity and respect.

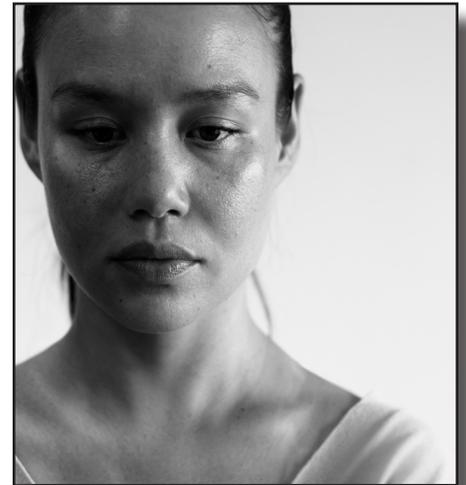
Stigma doesn't always come from external sources. It can be very internal for students: "How do *you* view your

emotional/mental health condition?" Sometimes they judge themselves in negative ways, confusing feeling bad with *being* bad, says the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI). And that's where stigma can set in.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) offers the following tips when it comes to mental health stigmas...

Do

- Use respectful language such as "person who has depression" or "person with a psychiatric disability"



- Emphasize abilities, not limitations
- Address someone if they're expressing a stigmatized attitude

Don't

- Use terms like "crazy," "lunatic," "manic depressive," "slow functioning" or "normal"
- Use generic labels such as "retarded" or "the mentally ill"
- Portray successful people with disabilities as super human

"You Are Not an Illness"

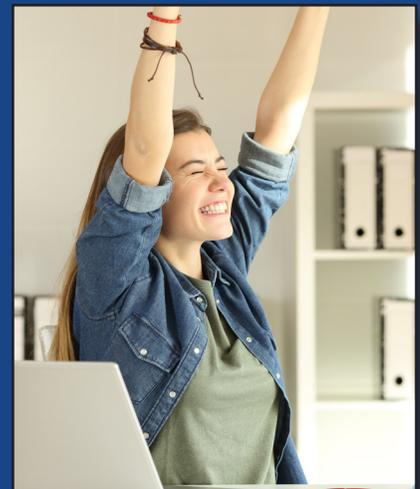
When talking with your student, you can share this reminder...

Try not to equate yourself with your illness. "You are not an illness," the Mayo Clinic reminds us. So, don't say, "I'm bipolar" or "I'm depressed." Instead, put yourself first, as in "I have bipolar disorder" or "I have depression."

Seasonal Student Issues

Here are a few things students may be experiencing this month...

- Feelings of happiness/restlessness from break
- Resolve to do better academically
- Renewed interest in classes and activities
- New leadership skills starting to emerge
- Unwanted weight gain from holidays
- Winter weather blues
- Not many social activities scheduled
- Possible roommate changes
- Anxiety and uncertainty for those who just arrived at a new school
- Contentment being back on campus after a few weeks away





Thinking about Summer Possibilities Now

Many students will be talking with advisors, professors and peers throughout the term about how to get the most out of their Summer 2021 break. Some will choose to take classes, while others will choose to get academic credit in an internship or to volunteer through a specific organization. If your student is interested in spending the summer in an academic-related internship, job or volunteer position, there are plenty of resources available to help find a good fit.

Career Office. The first stop your student can make is in the campus career office. Typically, the office will have access to internship listings in every academic field. The staff can also offer students guidance on what types of experiences will help them gain the best professional experience and where to go to get more information.



Faculty and Staff. Talking with trusted faculty and staff members is another good idea. When students show initiative and express an interest, these professionals may be able to help identify good possibilities.

Community Service Office. Discussing volunteer options with the community service staff can help bring

those opportunities to the forefront. What would your student like to do? What causes are important to him? What limits are there (e.g. financial, geographical, etc.)?

Alumni Affairs. If your student has a specific interest, the alumni office may be able to help identify an alum who would be glad to talk with her. This might lead to a job shadowing possibility or invaluable career connection. It's certainly worth a try!

The process for deciding what to do during the summer can overwhelm some students initially. Sometimes, they end up so overwhelmed with the possibilities that they procrastinate. Oftentimes, this results in missed deadlines and opportunities. So, encourage your student to start the decision process *early* to keep it manageable and to embrace the wide variety of summer possibilities!

After-Holiday Money Matters

Once the holidays are over, many students find themselves contending with bills and money woes. If your student is one of those people, here are some tips to share...

- ▶ Write out a budget for the remainder of the academic year to plan effectively
- ▶ Look into campus job possibilities – every bit helps!
- ▶ Now that she knows her general expenses, talk with her about what she can cut out to save money
- ▶ Find out more about available scholarships and start applying!
- ▶ Consider what the summer will bring now – will he need to work or can he take classes? – in order for your student to stay financially viable





Calm and In Control

Nobody gets anywhere when they shout their message and operate from a place of anger because they are often written off as irrational and not worth paying attention to. This can be particularly true when trying to engage in positive political, racial or social justice discourse.

So, how can people keep their anger at bay and stay calm and controlled in the face of often heated debates? Some strategies to share with your student may include...

Set Clear Goals and Have a Plan. Determine what you hope to accomplish and what success will look like to you.

Be Aware of Your Strengths and Weaknesses. This way, you'll know when to summon the positives and tamp down the shortcomings.

Identify a Coping Strategy. When you feel yourself getting angry and losing control, how can you reel yourself back in? Taking a moment to count to

10, engaging in deep breathing, stepping away for a minute... all can cut the tension and lead to more calm.

Don't Take the Bait. Some people will try to egg you on, so recognize that and don't give in.

Practice Self-Discipline. It's a learned behavior that requires repetition and practice.

Know Your Triggers. Acknowledging your weak spots means you won't be surprised when they surface.

Give Yourself a Backup Plan. Go into situations with a plan for extracting yourself should things become contentious.

Forgive Yourself and Move Forward. Keep moving ahead, even if you fall short at times, rather than getting hung up by guilt, anger or frustration.

Sources: American Psychological Association, Vol. 43, No. 1, January 2012; *Psychology Today*; Entrepreneur.com, 5/14/19

Resources

- ▶ NYU's Calming Corner: <https://bit.ly/2MaKH84>
- ▶ "All It Takes is 10 Mindful Minutes" TED Talk: <https://bit.ly/1ApYvfJ>
- ▶ The Stop, Breathe & Think App: www.stopbreathe.think.com



Breaking Out of the Comfort Zone

When students open themselves to discussions with people who believe very different things than they do, they're stepping outside their comfort zone. It's one thing to rant, rave and process with those who share their ideology. Yet, it's quite another to discuss differing viewpoints that challenge their critical thinking skills.

Encourage them to think about how they can step outside their comfort zone to expose themselves to new ways of thinking and gather new information. Maybe it's attending a meeting of the Human Rights organization on campus. Or it could be inviting someone with a different political viewpoint out for coffee and a respectful discussion. Consider all the options there are for comfort zone busting!

Sure, breaking free from their comfort zone can be uncomfortable at times, yet it's also one of the biggest ways to bridge ideological divides and learn more about themselves in the process.

"Taking risks, regardless of their outcome, are growth experiences. Even if you make mistakes or don't get it right the first time those become experiences you can tap into in the future. There really is no such thing as 'fail' if you get something out of the experience. And just so you know, 'FAIL' re-framed means 'First Attempt In Learning.'"

– Abigail Brenner, M.D., *Psychology Today*, 12/27/15