



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

December 2019

Increasing Students' Well-Being During This Stressful Time of Year

There's a myth surrounding college in December: that it needs to be a caffeine-fueled, all-nighter kind of scene in order for students to do well academically as they wrap up the term.

However, that doesn't have to be the case. Sharing a few simple tips can help increase students' well-being while decreasing their stress levels...

Develop a Study Schedule.

Feeling prepared for finals can *greatly* increase students' confidence. One way to do this is for them to develop a study plan – and stick to it. By taking a careful look at what finals and projects are coming up and then devoting time to each, your student is much more likely to be confident and competent addressing the challenges ahead.

Take Positive Breaks. There are a good number of holiday happenings on campus these days. It's healthy for students to take breaks and partake in the festivities! That way, they can



return to their studies in a positive frame of mind, ready to hunker down and get things done.

Recognize and Handle Stress in Healthy Ways. Some students decide to “blow off steam” by going out and getting intoxicated. Others alleviate stress by playing volleyball with friends or going to hear the campus gospel choir's holiday concert. Guess which students will be more stressed as they try to recoup lost time, and which will be rejuvenated?

Get Good Sleep. Concentration and focus are keys to your student's success during this academically rigorous time of year. And both of these things are helped along by good sleep. All-nighters may *seem* like a good idea, yet they can backfire when your student gets overtired and starts forgetting critical information.

All the best to you and your student, as you make it through this challenging time!

Other important things, like stepping away from the computer, eating nutritious foods and not over-relying on caffeine, can help your student get through this challenging time in tip-top shape!



Career Exploration, Winter Break-Style

Winter break is an excellent time for your student to slow down and look ahead, especially when it comes to career exploration and preparation. It's never too early to embark on this path – students who examine career options now will be much better situated when the true career search begins!

You can help by asking your student some simple questions during your holiday down time. They might include...

- What classes have you enjoyed?
- Why is that?
- Who has a job that seems appealing to you?
- What is the appeal?
- What would you definitely like to have in your workplace?
- What would you definitely *not* like to have within your workplace?

Career Checklist for Winter Break

Here are a series of tasks that students can undertake during winter break to ready themselves for the career search – whether it's for full-time work or a summer gig...

- Line up three references
- Draft a resume
- Take a career inventory or two
- Shadow someone in a job of interest
- Connect with a local alum
- Read an article or book about a career option



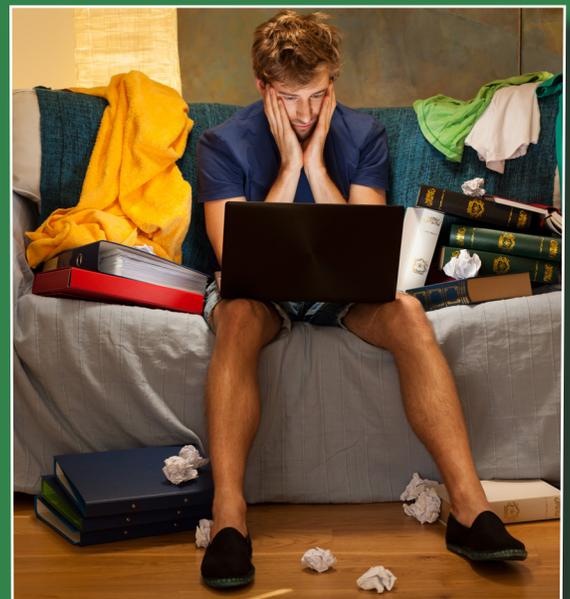
- What topics do you have a passion for?
- What types of things do you think you are good at?

By examining these types of scenarios with students, you'll be helping them tap into what's important as they work to make solid career-related decisions.

Seasonal 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...

- Panic, fear and cramming as finals and paper deadlines approach
- High temper as stress mounts
- The realization that some friends may not be returning next semester
- Increased pressure to participate in sexual activity because extended separation is approaching
- Financial strain due to holiday gifts and travel costs
- Religious conflicts, as they get ready to return home after a semester of gaining new perspectives
- Excitement or anxiety about returning home





5 Anger Management Tips

This can be a volatile time of year on campus. Stress, a lack of sleep and trying to finish multiple tasks in a small amount of time may put many students on edge. And when they're feeling like they're on their last nerve, it can be easy to lose their temper.

Learning to manage their anger is so important. When anger isn't expressed appropriately, it can disrupt relationships, affect thinking and behavior patterns, and also create a variety of physical problems. Those who chronically suppress anger can experience health issues such as high blood pressure, heart problems, headaches, digestive problems and depression.

However, when people effectively manage their anger, they can more successfully and safely get on with things. Here are some anger management tips to share with your student...

- 1. Take a Break.** It's a simple tool yet counting to 10 before reacting can *really* help defuse anger or frustration. Deep breathing, visualizing a relaxing scene or repeating a calming word can also be helpful.
- 2. Calmly Express Your Emotions.** Expressing anger is healthy, but it's important to do so in a non-confrontational manner. Be assertive, not aggressive.
- 3. Be Careful with the Words You Use.** It's easy to get carried away when emotions are involved. Stick to the issue at hand and don't say anything you'll regret later.

"Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured."

- Mark Twain

- 4. Use "I" Statements.** Avoid blaming language and instead share how you feel from the "I" perspective ("I feel upset when..."). The other person is less likely to get defensive as a result.
- 5. Identify Solutions to the Problem.** After expressing your concerns, offer potential solutions to resolve the issue at hand.

It's important to remember that conflict is typically neutral. It's the behavior of the individuals experiencing conflict that determines its value. By managing anger in positive ways, your student is less likely to let it derail him.

Sources: WebMD.com; MayoClinic.com

Keeping an Open Mind to Students' New Perspectives

Chances are that your student's worldview has expanded during the past term. After all, that's one of the main reasons higher education exists!

However, listening to your student's different perspectives and rationales may be surprising at first. Don't worry – you still know your student. There just may be some topics that she is learning more about and making decisions about that don't fully match your own perspectives. That's where love, understanding and agreeing to disagree can be your very best tools.

Some of the topics that may arise include religion and spirituality, politics, culture and race, poverty and homelessness, courses of study, humanitarian issues and world news, among others.

As you listen to your student share her perspectives, try not to call them "wrong" or "misguided." Instead, allow her to express herself. Ask questions, if you like. And share your perspectives, too. You likely won't agree on every little thing, yet try to remind yourself that learning to express points of view – no matter what they are – is a strength that will serve your student *very well* in the long-run.





Priming the Mind So It's Ready for Next Year

Yes, the holiday break is a time to relax and kick back with family and friends. That doesn't mean your student's brainpower needs to suffer, though! There are simple, interesting ways to keep the mind primed and ready for the upcoming term.

For instance, you might encourage students to...

Work on Puzzles. Do a crossword puzzle with granddad, attempt to answer the NPR Puzzlemaster's Sunday puzzle, or play Balderdash or Boggle with friends. Engaging in word games, logic puzzles and more is fun while also being brain-beneficial.

Talk about Learning. Recalling some of the key things learned in

classes this term and sharing them with others is part of the college experience. By verbalizing what is being learned, the information is bound to stick with your student even more!

Learn Something New. It might happen during a conversation with a cousin who is studying nursing, while listening to the news or when hearing about a friend's experiences studying abroad. Encourage your student to soak in new information, search for more about a topic and stay curious!

Read a Book for Pleasure. Engaging with multiple characters and plot arcs will help keep the synapses firing on all cylinders! Plus, it just feels *good* to read for pleasure.

Have a Fresh Experience. We tend to learn when we're in uncertain circumstances. So, why not encourage your student to attend a concert featuring music he or she hasn't heard before? Or attend a cultural/spiritual holiday celebration, a book reading at the local library or an Indian cooking class? There are so many interesting things happening during the holidays! And maybe you can experience some of them *together*.

Keeping the brain limber during the holiday break will help your student be ready to dig into the new term refreshed and well-prepared for the learning ahead!

Computer Comfort During This Season of Overuse

As students spend increasing hours at computers this month, finishing final papers and projects, ergonomic issues become even more important.

Here are a few things that you and your student can keep in mind to stay healthy when using technology...

- Make sure the top of your monitor is at or just below eye level
- Keep your head and neck balanced and in line with your torso
- Relax your shoulders
- Keep elbows close to your body and supported
- Support your lower back
- Have wrists and hands in line with your forearms
- Make adequate room for your keyboard and mouse
- Keep your feet flat on the floor

By getting into better ergonomic habits such as these, you and your student can continue typing and engaging technologically without pain and discomfort. There's no need to contort your body in order to use the computer. Your body will thank you!

For a detailed checklist that you can use to evaluate your computer workstation, head over to: <https://bit.ly/2CwJn8F>.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA, www.osha.gov

