When Your Student Has a Conflict

A roommate conflict, a struggle between two friends, a misunderstanding with a professor… your student is bound to get wrapped up in conflict at some point during her collegiate career. This can be difficult to hear about as that student’s parent or family member. Yet, it’s all a natural, even healthy part of the developmental process.

When handled well, conflict can be a learning tool and an opportunity for growth. So, rather than shielding your student from conflict, determine what you can do when it inevitably occurs.

- **Don’t Jump Right In.** At the first sign of conflict, try not to rush to the rescue, no matter how strong the urge. A student who can face conflict and figure it out on her own will be stronger for it. You can listen and provide guidance without taking on the problem for her.

- **Provide Support.** A student in the midst of conflict will likely be angry, flustered, anxious or a combination of the three. Offer support when he talks about what’s going on. This can help him feel more confident as he works to resolve the conflict. It always feels better to know that someone is rooting you on!

- **Urge Your Student to Seek Help.** If a conflict appears violent or out-of-control, encourage your student to seek assistance from campus support staff immediately. This can include their student staff member, their hall director, a public safety officer, someone from counseling, a coach, an advisor… the list is long of folks willing to help. These people are there to talk through non-violent conflict, too, and offer on campus support as your student works to resolve her issues with someone else.

- **Provide Perspective.** Sometimes students need someone to play devil’s advocate so they can see all sides to an issue. Instead of immediately rushing to take your student’s “side,” offer a dose of perspective. “Have you thought about…?” can go a long way in helping them understand and, ultimately, solve the conflict.

- **Applaud Your Student’s Self-Responsibility.** Let your student know that you’re proud of how she has chosen to work through the conflict. She’s growing by taking responsibility for her actions – and her life. And your affirmation helps her know that, when faced with the next conflict, she’ll be able to work it through.
Deciding Where to Live Next Year

If your student lives away at school, where will she call home next year? It’s room selection and apartment-looking season, as students determine whether they will live on- or off-campus in the academic year ahead.

To help with these decisions, here are some important things for your student to consider...

- What is he involved in? Will it still be doable to be that involved if he lives off-campus?
- What about work? If the job is on- or off-campus, will she be able to find parking and get to work on time?
- What about transportation? Will a car be in the equation?
- Who will he live with? What kind of influence will these people be?
- What about eating options? Will she get enough nutrition if she is cooking for herself, without a meal plan?

It’s Your Student’s Responsibility

Encourage your student to attend meetings and ask questions now to learn about the housing process. He’ll feel much more prepared if he does. It’s up to him to follow campus procedures in order to secure housing for next year. If he doesn’t understand the process, there are people who can help. Students need to be proactive and informed in order to make the housing system work in their favor!

- When does a lease run? Will he be paying for time that he won’t be living there? If so, how will that be handled?
- If she lives on campus next year, what environment would be best? Should she live in a campus apartment, a suite, a theme house or somewhere else?
- What about summer storage? Will that be available?
- What costs are involved with housing, transportation, food and more? How do these balance out when comparing the realities of on- and off-campus living?

These questions can help students look at the big picture. It’s not just about holing up with three of their best buddies in an off-campus apartment or on-campus suite. It’s about how this decision will impact other areas of your student’s life, from involvement to finances to wellness… and beyond.

Seasonal Student Issues

Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month...

- Things become routine… school finally becomes home
- Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- Difficulty getting into study mode
- Cabin fever and burnout
- Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety
- Sophomores facing decisions about declaring a major
- Spring break planning underway
- Valentine’s Day depression, if not dating or if a relationship is not going well
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who didn’t return to school
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
Asking for Consent

Consent involves enthusiastic, freely given, affirmative agreement to engage in sexual activity. As students navigate this terrain, here are a few tips to share with them to make sure they are respecting themselves and their partners, should they make this choice…

- Ask for consent before taking ANY action
- Although it may feel awkward initially, it’ll feel more natural with practice
- The person initiating sexual activity is responsible for obtaining clear consent
- Consent is active and must be given at that moment
- Consent must be voluntary and given without coercion, intimidation, force or threats
- If you’re not sure that consent has been given, do NOT act
- A lack of verbal or physical resistance doesn’t equal consent

“Asking for consent eliminates the entitlement that one partner feels over the other. Neither your body nor your sexuality belongs to someone else.”

- Temple University’s Wellness Resource Center

- Silence doesn’t equal consent
- A person who is unconscious, incapacitated (including by alcohol or other drugs), a minor, or physically or mentally impaired cannot give consent
- Consent given earlier doesn’t mean that person can’t change their mind
- Every sexual act that takes place must have consent — “yes” to one thing doesn’t mean “yes” to everything
- If consent is withdrawn — and it always can be — sexual activity must stop immediately
- Ask open-ended questions and listen to and respect your partner’s response
- A current or prior relationship doesn’t automatically equal consent (e.g. if you’re in a romantic relationship or were previously)
- Consent is more than “yes” or “no” — instead, it’s about asking, listening and paying attention to your partner’s signals, as well as respecting those signals

And, remember, getting someone to give in is NOT the same as them giving consent. Ever.

Sources: Wellness Resource Center’s “Consent” page, Temple University; VAWA Brochure, University of Miami (FL); University of California’s VAWA Training; “Defining and Understanding Consent,” Whitman College (WA)

Back in the Academic Groove

Getting back in the school swing of things after winter break can take some doing. To get back in the academic groove, you can encourage students to…

- Visit the learning center/a tutor now to address an academic concern from last term (i.e. test anxiety, writing assistance, etc.)
- Keep up with readings from the beginning
- Find a new place to study
- Get to know professors through office hours
- Limit online diversions when using a computer or tablet
- Use a reward system that works for them

And ask your student about some things that he is learning when you see each other or talk on the phone. Having to articulate what he is learning can help him solidify that knowledge – and appreciate it even more.
The Most In-Demand Skills of 2019

What are employers looking for? There’s currently a skills gap, which is causing many employers to shift their focus from specific titles and experiences to what skills a potential employee may bring to the table. These are often broken down into soft and hard skills, according to LinkedIn.

5 Most In-Demand Soft Skills

- Creativity
- Persuasion
- Collaboration
- Adaptability
- Time Management

5 Most In-Demand Hard Skills

- Cloud Computing
- Artificial Intelligence
- Analytical Reasoning
- People Management
- UX Design

Employer’s priorities are shifting, according to LinkedIn Learning’s editor Paul Petrone. “Interestingly, the newcomers to our list were uniquely human traits: Among soft skills, creativity and adaptability joined the list for the first time, and among hard skills, people management was a new addition,” he told CNBC.

“While digital skills like cloud computing and artificial intelligence topped the list of hard skills companies need most, the emergence of these three new skills suggests that employers recognize the importance of embracing modern technologies as well as recognizing those things technology can’t do: connect with other people, engage in out-of-the-box thinking and quickly adapt to new priorities or problems.”

Source: CNBC.com, 1/6/19

Choosing a Job or Internship: Questions to Consider

When your student faces the decision about choosing a job or an internship possibility for the summer, a few reflective questions can help in the process…

- What types of things might I learn here?
- Who might serve as my supervisor or a potential mentor?
- Will taking this risk serve me well in the long-run? If so, why?
- Is the experience worth:
  - The pay?
  - The need to live elsewhere?
  - Turning down something else?
- How might this experience help me figure out what I want to do career-wise?

Exploring these types of questions with your student can help him determine if a job or internship will fit in the ways he needs it to.