



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

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## Encouraging Positive Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a belief in one's self, or self-respect. And, according to many experts, it is something that often eludes many college students. For one reason or another, many young people suffer from a lack of self-esteem, which can affect how they adjust to college life and function as students.

### What are some signs of healthy self-esteem?

People who have a healthy sense of self-esteem will feel competent in their ability to cope with life's ever-changing situations. They trust their judgment and know how to get help when a challenge arises. They feel capable of making sound, responsible choices and can handle change when it occurs.

But healthy self-esteem is not egotism. It is *never* a feeling of superiority over others. In fact, if a person seems to need to remind others of his talents or skills, it could be a symptom of someone who is trying to compensate for a lack of self-esteem.

### What can you expect this year?

At the college level, issues of self-confidence and competence can surface as students try to adjust to an

unfamiliar setting and challenging academic expectations. The good student might have to work harder to maintain the same grade point average, while the mediocre student might have concerns about being good enough to make it. Being away from home can also contribute to an unsettled feeling. An otherwise self-confident young adult might show signs of insecurity and emotional withdrawal for the first time in his life.

Students are adjusting to a new social scene as well. Their relationships with friends from home are changing even as new relationships are developing. It takes time for students to find their voice and identity within a different setting.

### What helps?

These dips in self-esteem are normal when people face new challenges. As students continue their academic and social pursuits, and begin to enjoy some degree of success, their self-esteem levels often start to rise again.



Things will likely get better if they...

#### **Build on Pre-existing Strengths.**

All students have competencies in various areas and often just need to be reminded of them, especially as they're being challenged right and left by new things on campus. By helping them focus on their strengths rather than weaknesses, they can grow in self-esteem and self-confidence.

**Avoid Comparisons with Others.** If your student is struggling with self-esteem and begins to look

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around at others who seem to have greater skills and achievements, he may back himself into a dangerous corner. His responsibility is to just try his best. From that effort alone he can find personal satisfaction and a healthy sense of pride. Remind your student that he doesn't have to be the best at something to be an asset to the campus community!

**Try New Things.** Your student can never know about a hidden talent or personal strength if she never tries new things. Now is the time for healthy experimentation, whether it involves a different academic area, a new responsibility, a new interest or hobby, or even some new friends. Your student – and you – might be surprised to find what interests or talents are just waiting to be discovered!

## We're Here to Help

If your student struggles with self-esteem issues, assure him that he is *not* alone! There are counselors and other staff members on campus who have chosen to work with college students and who know their issues. Your student can call now to see what services are available so he is plugged into a support network right at the beginning of school.

More than anything, make sure your student knows that it's a *real* sign of strength to ask for help. We encourage that mightily and look forward to helping your student get on the road to healthier self-esteem.



## Seasonal Student Issues

Students preparing to dive into college for the first time may have a lot of things on their minds, such as...

- Feeling sad about leaving established friends and family at home
- Concern about issues of “belonging” and finding a comfortable place on campus
- Excitement coupled with anxiety about making a fresh start
- Worry about academics being “hard” and beyond their abilities
- Thinking about what type of first impression they'll make
- Concern about roommates and housing (if living on campus)
- Wondering what to pack and what to leave at home since space will be limited
- Possibly transitioning into a long-distance relationship or deciding to end a current relationship
- Financial worries – wondering if they'll be able to make enough during the summer and how much they'll need to work once school begins
- What to expect during orientation and what questions to ask so they'll be prepared for the fall term





## Planning Your Goodbyes

It may still feel like a long time until your student heads to school, yet the time will go quickly. And it's easy for your students' dwindling time to be eaten up with work, getting ready for school, seeing friends and more.

So, plan your goodbyes now to carve out precious time with your student. If you'd like to have a family dinner before he leaves, schedule it now. Thinking about going away for a weekend? Tell everyone and put it on the calendar. Want to go shopping for school essentials or spend some



time hiking with your student? Don't let too much time slip away before making a plan.

All these things – and more – are important ways for you to spend time

and say your goodbyes. Don't leave them happening to chance... plan ahead and you'll feel better about making the most of these summer moments with your student.

### Starting a Healthy Habit Now!

Conventional wisdom says it takes about 21 days for something to become a habit. That's why now could be the perfect time for your student to embark upon a healthy practice so it becomes a habit by the time he heads to school.

Habits don't have to be big and life-altering, yet they can lead the way to a healthier way of life. Some habits for students to consider now that can help them thrive at school may include...

- ▶ Drinking 8 glasses of water each day
- ▶ Getting at least 7 hours of sleep each night
- ▶ Eating more veggies
- ▶ Doing 10 minutes of stretching each morning
- ▶ Keeping a gratitude journal
- ▶ Only checking social media 1-2 times per day
- ▶ Putting the phone away when talking with someone
- ▶ Having an organized desk
- ▶ Creating a soothing before-bed ritual
- ▶ Exercising 3-4 times per week
- ▶ Reaching out to someone each day, in person or via phone, text, Facetime or mail

With a healthy new habit in tow, your student's confidence and well-being will grow as he embarks upon a new school year!





# Developing Emotional Intelligence

You may have heard about “Emotional Intelligence” and how important it is for students to develop this quality. Higher levels of “EI” can help them build solid relationships, develop leadership skills and become more successful in life.

According to Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, EI is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.” Goleman states that EI drives two-thirds of an individual’s performance and that it is four times more important than IQ in terms of overall success. In other words, book smarts aren’t the only thing that will lead your student to a positive, productive life.

## EI Capabilities

An emotionally intelligent person demonstrates the ability to...

### Know Themselves

- Able to assess herself realistically
- Has deep understanding of her own strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives
- Recognizes how her feelings affect herself and others

### Manage Feelings and Impulses

- Controls bad moods and emotional impulses
- Chooses his words carefully
- Avoids hasty judgments
- Creates an environment of trust and fairness

### Understand Social Dynamics

- Understands how an organization/group works

- Able to sense how people are feeling
- Understands various viewpoints
- Brings conflict out into the open
- Willingly collaborates across boundaries

## Be Socially Advanced

- Has a talent for finding common ground with people of all kinds and has a network of people in place when the time for action comes

- Committed to helping people improve
- Friendly with a purpose: moving people in the direction they desire
- Excellent persuader and collaborator

As your student develops these capacities, she’ll have the ability to change and grow, and to be flexible and responsive while engaging others. These are the building blocks of leadership and managing relationships that will lead your student to a lifetime of success all the way around.

## Becoming Emotionally Intelligent

Students can work to develop their Emotional Intelligence by...

- Learning to really listen to others instead of always thinking about what they’re going to say next
- Collaborating on programs and projects
- Getting to know people in a variety of groups instead of just sticking to their comfort zones
- Engaging in community service, especially when it involves interacting with others
- Taking on a leadership position within a club, team, work or organizational setting
- Working with others whenever possible, whether it’s getting a hall volleyball team together or creating a study group
- Mentoring others and focusing on how to help *them* succeed
- Taking personality and skills inventories through the career services office
- Talking through issues and emotions with someone from the counseling center to know themselves better

