Bridging the School/Home Gap

After a long academic year, your student may now be home from school, working instead of going to classes and readjusting to life among different people. This can be quite a transition for some students.

You can help them bridge this summer gap by offering the following suggestions…

**Being Intentional About Re-establishing Relationships.** While at home, students have an opportunity to reestablish connections with old friends, siblings, other family members and more. Encourage them to make intentional outreach efforts like taking a younger brother out for ice cream once a week, playing tennis with an old high school friend and more. This can help make home a warmer, more engaged place to be.

**Connecting with College Friends.** Despite distance, your student can stay connected with those friends he grew close to over the past year. Social media, road trips, texts… all can work. Plus, let your student know if you’re comfortable with him inviting college friends to the house for an in-person visit.

**Keeping the Brain Limber.** Your student may not be taking classes this summer, yet it’s still important for her to keep her brain in shape so she’s well-prepared to dig into fall coursework. Encourage her to read, have discussions about world happenings where she shares her viewpoint, attend one-shot workshops to learn something new and more. The brain is a muscle that needs constant stretching!

**Working Toward Career Goals.** It’s important that students don’t take the summer “off” from their career pursuits. Encourage your student to job shadow someone with a career that interests him, to reach out to local alumni to discuss workplace issues or to find work in a field related to his academic concentration. This will set him up for continued exploration and success once the academic year starts up again.

Summer offers valuable time – for purposeful work, self-discovery, continued learning, strong connections and more. By encouraging your student to make the most of this time, you’ll be helping him make the transition with success.
Summertime Photo Ops

Summertime photo ops are plentiful! Here are a few tips to keep in mind when it comes to creating – and looking good – in all those pictures…

Posing. Lower your front shoulder slightly to elongate your neck and create more dynamic angles. Stick your chin out a little bit to prevent the double chin look. And stand at a slight angle to the camera for the most flattering look, rather than facing it head-on.

Light. Take advantage of natural light, as well as the warmer light of early morning and late afternoon. Use the flash when shooting indoors, but not too close to your subject. And don’t pose against overly bright windows or backgrounds.

Colors. White can make you look washed out and black can disappear in photos, while vibrant colors can brighten your skin tone. If you have pink or rosy skin undertones, consider wearing cool colors like blue and purple. If you have golden or apricot undertones, go for warm colors like red and mocha instead.

Distractions. In photos, stripes, florals and other designs can be distracting. So, too, can lots of jewelry and shiny fabric.

Relax. Putting your tongue behind your teeth when you smile is a good way to relax your face. So, too, is keeping your arms by your side naturally, just a little way from your body. And relax those shoulders by rolling them back and pushing them down.

Posture. Stand tall and straight, as if your head is being pulled upward by a string, rather than hunching and hiding.

Sources: HP’s “How to look good in photos,” www.hp.com; Reader’s Digest “10 Ways to Look Good in Photos,” www.rd.com; Photoble’s “10 Tips to Always Look Good in Photos,” www.photoble.com

Eye Tricks

➢ To avoid the dreaded “closed eye look,” try blinking halfway through a photographer’s count of three so your eyes will be open when she clicks the shutter.
➢ Close your eyes and then open them slowly right before the photo is being taken to feel at ease.
➢ Focus your eyes slightly above the camera lens.

How Students Can Stay Safe When Dating

Your student may engage in a dating relationship this summer. As with any dating situation, it’s important to stay safe while getting to know someone. Here are a few tips you can share…

➢ Always trust your instincts – if something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t
➢ Consider double-dating the first few times you go out with a new person
➢ Be aware of your decreased ability to react under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
➢ Before leaving on a date, know the exact plans for the evening and make sure someone knows the plans and what time to expect you home
➢ If you leave a party or bar with someone, make sure you tell a friend that you are leaving and with whom – ask that person to call and make sure you arrived home safely
➢ Assert yourself clearly when necessary – you can say “no” at any time
➢ Be careful of what is posted and shared online
➢ If initiating intimate activity, gain clear consent each time – and stop immediately if there is no verbal consent, if someone says “no” or if the other person is incapacitated by alcohol/other drugs (which means they’re unable to consent)
Making the Most of Orientation

We welcome you to orientation and have a few tips about how to make the most of this time…

- Think about questions ahead of time so you can get answers to your most pressing queries
- Don’t hesitate to ask questions during presentations – there’s no such thing as a “dumb” question in our book!
- Let students navigate things on their own, while being there to offer assistance when they ask for it
- Stay hydrated, especially during the hot weather
- Take tours and get the lay of the land so you can envision where your student will be spending time
- Work with your student to have paperwork ready ahead of time
- Process through the orientation experience with your student afterward so you can compare notes and share what was learned

Managing Test Anxiety

During orientation, your student may need to take some tests. If he/she is prone to test anxiety, here are some anxiety control tips from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Counseling Center that can help…

- Distract yourself by reading a magazine or newspaper if waiting for the test to begin causes anxiety.
- Avoid coffee if you’re prone to “caffeine jitters.” It can make you feel light-headed and anxious.
- At the beginning of the exam, tell yourself, “I can be anxious later, now is the time to take the exam.”
- Just focus on answering the questions, not on your grade or others’ performances.
- Counter negative thoughts with other, more valid thoughts like, “I don’t have to be perfect.”
- Tense and relax muscles throughout your body; take a couple of slow deep breaths and try to maintain a positive attitude.
- If allowed, get a drink or go to the bathroom.
- Ask the instructor a question.
- Break your pencil lead – then go sharpen it.
- Think for a moment about the post-exam reward you promised yourself.
- Remember to breathe and quiet your mind.

Seasonal Student Issues

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

- Missing friends at school and feeling like it’ll be a long time until they see them again
- Transitioning back to life at home after being away all year (for students who go away to school)
- Adjusting to a new routine
- Working full-time instead of going to school full-time
- Anxiety about academics – feeling like they have a lot of ground to make up if they did poorly last term
- Reestablishing relationships with siblings, parents and friends
- Budgeting their money and saving for fall

Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Counseling Center, www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu
Capturing Oral Histories to Connect with Family & Friends

Summer offers students a good opportunity to connect with friends and family. One purposeful way to do that is by capturing their stories through an oral history initiative.

The StoryCorps storytelling program has already been experienced by a quarter of a million people, as they work with a partner to record and preserve their life stories. It’s part of the tradition of oral histories – asking questions of a relative or friend and recording these memories so they can be preserved for generations.

By letting students know about this option, they may choose to talk with a favorite aunt or grandparent to capture their oral history. Or maybe you and your student can share this meaningful experience. The StoryCorps website at www.storycorps.org shares details about how to embark on this process.

Oral histories capture our stories and provide structured opportunities for loved ones to share interesting, sometimes hidden information. What better way for students to spend some meaningful time with loved ones this summer!

Encouraging Self-Responsibility

Chances are that you’ve been encouraging your student to take responsibility for her actions for quite some time. This character trait will serve her well in college, too.

Here are some summertime strategies that can help prepare your student for the self-responsibility required during the academic year – and beyond…

- **Questions.** If there’s a question about financial aid, a housing issue or some other campus concern, encourage your student to call that office directly to straighten things out. You can help by role-playing the conversation ahead of time to help him prepare what to say.

- **Planning.** What will your student need to prepare for her living space next year? What paperwork needs to be filled out? What medical appointments need to be squeezed in this summer? Make lists with your student to help her plan ahead – and then let her take care of the details.

- **Follow-Through.** Although your instinct may be to check in with your student about every detail, it’s important to give him some independence. Perhaps you can check in every other week, to see where important issues stand and hold him accountable, without holding his hand every step of the way.

This type of approach allows you to support students from the sidelines by teaching them to take responsibility in incremental steps. By doing so, you’ll be preparing them for self-directed action in the year ahead and a lifetime of self-responsibility!

“**It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do for themselves, that will make them successful human beings.”**

~ Ann Landers

How-To

There are recording sites throughout the U.S. where loved ones can share a 40-minute conversation and have it recorded. Or students can use the StoryCorps App and plan to record anywhere. The StoryCorps website offers sample questions and other tips, too.