



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

November 2016

## 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:

- ▶ Roommate problems and floor tension
- ▶ Academic pressures due to procrastination, workload and lack of ability
- ▶ Burnout
- ▶ Not feeling like they have the stamina to keep up the pace through finals
- ▶ Job search stress for holiday break
- ▶ Problems from increased alcohol consumption
- ▶ Lack of initiative to find new friends or activities because it seems social groups are already set up
- ▶ Concerns about going home at Thanksgiving time – whether it's concern about seeing changes among old friends, how things will be with family members or dealing with a romantic relationship

## Effectively Handling Floor Tensions

After a few months of living together, it's easy for tempers to flare and for tolerance to wane. If your student is caught in the middle of tension on her residence hall floor, there are some ways she can steer clear of the turbulence while also not contributing to the churn.

For instance...

**Don't Take Sides.** Just because there's a feud between certain people or groups on her floor, it doesn't mean that your student has to take sides. She can interact equally with everyone, showing her willingness to engage and her diplomacy. This takes courage and character – and can ultimately lead to stronger floor relationships.

**Choose Not to Engage in Drama.** Life already has enough inherent drama. So, why add to it? Steering clear of the rumor mill and gossip circles can help your student not get caught up in the drama of it all.

**Don't Talk Behind Backs.** When there's trouble brewing, folks sometimes tend to process and talk behind

In any interaction, it can help to ask...

- ▶ Is it kind?
- ▶ Is it true?
- ▶ Is it necessary?

one another's backs, rather than confronting issues head-on. Encourage your student not to get swept up into this practice, as it can lead to misunderstandings and much more trouble than it's worth.

**Confront Issues Head-on.** It's a healthy practice to talk directly with someone that you're struggling with, rather than behind his back. Students who talk face-to-face can come to agreements and will likely respect one another more.

**Don't Engage in Social Media Battles.** When there's tension, sometimes people take to the anonymity of social media to express their views. This can result in misunderstandings, bullying and more. It doesn't help.

**Be Kind.** Ultimately, when it comes to human interactions, operating from a place of kindness and care can make all the difference. Encourage your student to consider her actions and reactions through this lens and she's bound to make good decisions.

**“Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.”**

— Eleanor Roosevelt



# The Thanksgiving Transition

A visit from your college student during Thanksgiving break will be a time of transition as you live under the same roof again. Here are some things to keep in mind as you lovingly make this transition work...

**Discuss, Don't Order.** A student who has been living independently for the past few months will naturally balk if ordered to do something. Have discussions instead, where you *listen* to one another.

**Consider Compromise.** Where can you compromise so that you and your student can meet in the middle?

**Prepare for Difference.** As your student learns new things and experiences new people, chances are that some of her views will change. Be prepared for her to express different opinions and discuss varied topics.

**Agree to Disagree.** You and your student may not always see eye to eye. This doesn't mean he

disrespects you. It's more about him testing his newfound knowledge and interests. So, agree to disagree on certain topics and listen to one another's different perspectives. You'll learn a good deal from one another!

**Reintegrate Into Family Life.** The student who has been away for a while may need time to reintegrate back into family life. Her sleep patterns may not jive with everyone else's. She may take some nudging

to participate in household chores. And siblings will need to get used to one another again. Just be prepared that this reintegration won't happen automatically.

The Thanksgiving transition will be okay, as long as you prepare for changes and remain open to your student. Talk about things, make him feel welcomed and realize that this Thanksgiving test run will make the winter break even better!

## The Stress of Heading Home

Although there will be a lot packed into the next few weeks as students finish up assignments and take exams, it's important not to forget that preparing to go home for the holidays can be a stressful time for your student.

### What You Can Do

Consider some of the things your student might be most nervous about:

- Sharing a new or different aspect of who she is
- Seeing a parent or sibling they've fought with over the phone during the last few months
- Seeing old friends or an old romantic partner
- Discussing a change of plans such as major choice, plans for upcoming breaks or wanting to go to a different school
- Coming clean about poor grades or getting in trouble at school
- Having to conform back to your rules and ways of doing things

Taking the time to talk with your student candidly and supportively during the next few weeks will help make the holiday break, whatever it may hold, more pleasant all the way around.



## Reconnecting with Old Friends

When students go home for Thanksgiving, it may be the first time they've seen some old friends. This can be a joyous occasion, while it can also be a bit awkward at first. Here are some ways for students to reconnect positively...

- Share stories yet make sure you're not doing all the talking
- Steer clear of bragging
- Don't just focus on the negative
- Ask questions
- Show an interest
- Share photos so you can see one another's rooms, friends, activities
- Ask about new friends at school
- Make plans for the longer winter break coming up in just a few weeks!



# Helping Students Who May Experience Secondary Drinking Effects

As stress turns more potent this term, some students may turn to alcohol to “take the edge off.” And, whether or not your student is choosing to partake, risky drinking behaviors often don’t just impact the students who are doing the drinking.

Consider talking with your student about this “secondary drinking effect” to make sure that he is standing up for his rights as a campus community member and keeping himself healthy, safe and well in the midst of it all.

Some of the ways that students may be negatively impacted by others’ alcohol abuse are:

- Taking care of an intoxicated roommate or other student
- Being subjected to an unwanted sexual advance
- Experiencing a loud hallway on nights when intoxicated residents return
- Getting into an argument with an intoxicated individual

- Not getting enough uninterrupted sleep or study time
- Having property damaged

If your student identifies experiencing any of these situations, encourage him to talk with his residence life staff or another advocate on campus right away. We certainly want to know this

information so we can address these behaviors and their individual impacts!

Fortunately, most students choose to drink responsibly or not at all. It’s those select few, however, who can disrupt the lives of many. Empower your student to seek assistance so his life isn’t disrupted by secondary drinking effects.

## Our Bodies, Ourselves

The book that has helped millions of women better understand their bodies, sexuality and reproductive health issues — *Our Bodies, Ourselves* — can be a useful resource for parents and their students.

In 1971, the book started as a pamphlet called “Women and Their Bodies” that was written by 12 women who became known as the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective. The most recent edition now weighs in at over 900 pages, with information added on topics such as environmental health risks, HIV and AIDS, sexual orientation and gender identity, menopause and the risks of hormone treatment, changes in the healthcare system, body image and much more.

While the book is a good resource, the Our Bodies Ourselves website ([www.ourbodiesourselves.org](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org)) also offers additional health news and content that can spark healthy, honest discussions between you and your student.

Source: [www.ourbodiesourselves.org](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org)

## The Vegan Choice

So, what does it mean when a student says they’ve adopted a vegan lifestyle?

Vegans go one step beyond what vegetarians choose by not eating animals; they steer clear of *all* animal products.

**What Does It Mean?** Vegans avoid using or consuming animal products. This includes items such as milk, cheese, eggs, leather, fur, wool, silk, down and products tested on animals (such as chemicals or cosmetics).

**Why?** Veganism is viewed as the touchstone of a cruelty-free lifestyle, plus it provides benefits to the lives of animals, to the environment and to individuals’ health.

Students often choose to make a commitment to a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle during their college years. The reasons for this vary – their awareness is raised, they are able to talk with more people making similar choices, they are stirred to get active – and this lifestyle choice is one part of it.



So, if your student expresses an interest in being a vegan, ask questions, provide support and be open to learning more about it along with him.

Sources: [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org); [www.vegan.org](http://www.vegan.org); [www.vrg.org](http://www.vrg.org)



# Winter Job Search Strategies

Is your student planning to work during winter break? If so, it's important that she get her ducks in a row now, before the holidays. After all, the second half of December is littered with people taking vacations and offices having a ghost town feel.

Some strategies to help in her search include...

**Reach Out to Known Elements.** Having an "in" by knowing someone can help your student get a foot in the door instead of going in cold. For instance, if a family friend knows someone who works at the local TV station, that person will be more likely to meet with your student to discuss possible employment.

**Have an "Elevator Speech" Prepared.** Your student should be able to express her interests and skills in 30-60 seconds. This "elevator speech" can come in handy when she is asked, "Tell us about yourself." Encourage her to prepare this now!

**Focus on Contributions, Not Needs.** Potential employees who share what they can contribute to an organization are much more likely to get a second look than those who just talk about their own needs. Students should research what employers need so they can more articulately share ways they can help solve those problems.



**Be Open to Options.** Students who are open to a variety of options are more likely to find employment than those who go in with rigid expectations. Encourage your student to keep an open mind and explore the possibilities.

## 5 Ways to Encourage Your Student to Stay in Touch with World News

It's so easy to get caught up in the campus bubble when you're going to school! You can help your student stay in touch with the world through these simple methods...

- 1. Tweet or text breaking news.** When you hear about something important happening in the world, either tweet or text the info to your student.
- 2. Send an email newswire with selected clips each week.** This is easier than you think. All you need to do is complete a quick search on the Internet for the top news stories of the week. Then, you can include the headline with the link. Put 3-4 stories in one email and send it along.
- 3. Surprise your student with a magazine subscription.** Get a

news magazine subscription for your student and have it delivered directly to him on campus. Although it can be tough for students to find time to read "extras" during the school year, it's important! Even a quick scan is better than not knowing about anything.

- 4. Plan a conversation dinner.** If you live close to campus, invite your student and some of his friends home for dinner to discuss a topic in the news.
- 5. Share podcasts.** The National Public Radio show "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me" mixes current events with entertainment – and is available in podcast form. Share some news podcast options with your student who may choose to listen



to them while working out or taking a walk.

Engaging in the world starts with having a working knowledge of what is going on. You can give your student this leg up by making news knowledge a simple – and supported – fact of life.