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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:

- **Low energy levels and restlessness**
- **Mid-semester slump and sickness**
- **Making plans for next year—housing, classes and financial aid**
- **Hidden conflicts between roommates and friends begin to arise**
- **Drug and alcohol use may increase**
- **Mid-term anxiety**
- **Seniors thinking about graduation**
- **Excitement or depression about Spring Break plans**
- **Pledging begins for Greek organizations**

The Overwhelmed Student: How Parents Can Help

Chances are that your student has a lot on his mind this month. Midterms, the academic crunch leading up to Spring Break, getting a summer job or internship, personal “stuff”... it's a lot to handle.

Many students succumb to feelings of being overwhelmed at this time of year. For some, it's a temporary thing alleviated by talking it out with friends or family, exercising or having a good cry. Others, however, can be paralyzed by their overwhelmed feelings.



Stepping in to Help

If you're concerned that your student isn't handling things well, help him break down the commitments in his life into more manageable chunks. For instance, if he has three big projects due before Spring Break, encourage him to write out steps that will lead to the completion of those projects. Tackling “create a bibliography” is much more doable than “get that whole huge 30-page paper done.”

Also, suggest that he talk things out with someone in the learning center or counseling center to help him get back on track. Being overwhelmed can be frightening and frustrating—he may just need to express his feelings so they're not bottled up, paralyzing him from moving forward. Or he may have

some anxiety issues to work through so he can learn to better cope when overwhelmed feelings start grabbing hold.

Another key way to help your student get past overwhelmed feelings is to let him know that you value and love him, no matter what his accomplishments are. That way, he's not working to get good grades for your approval or taking on too many leadership positions in hopes that you'll notice. Instead, he'll be doing things for himself, turning “shoulds” into “coulds.”

Think Your Student is Overwhelmed?

If so, she may be...

- ▲ constantly feeling behind
- ▲ worried about how others perceive her
- ▲ feeling like she's letting people down
- ▲ not able to get a handle on her various commitments
- ▲ paralyzed by multi-tasking
- ▲ consistently disorganized
- ▲ not as reliable as she usually is
- ▲ frustrated with herself
- ▲ burned out
- ▲ tense to the point of anger and other intense emotions (crying, swearing, etc.)
- ▲ scattered and unfocused

Video Game Gambles

Repetitive stress injuries from too many hours at the controls

Does your student go nuts for video games, spending hours at the controls? If so, he may be setting himself up for syndromes such as tendonitis, bursitis and carpal tunnel that can be caused by repetitive stress on the tendons, ligaments, and nerves in his hands and arms.

In order to enjoy video games but still stay healthy, the experts recommend that students:

- Use good posture, sitting in a chair that provides good back support and allows their feet to reach the floor.
- Keep their wrists straight, without letting them drop down while holding the game or controller.
- Get up and move every 20 minutes to give the head, muscles and shoulders a break.

Great Gamer Exercises

When your student plays video games or uses hand held devices, the following exercises can help him keep repetitive stress injuries at bay:

1. Tap each finger with the thumb of the same hand (e.g. make an "A-OK" sign with your thumb and first finger, then repeat with middle finger, ring finger and pinky). Repeat five times on each hand.
2. Starting with your hands on your thighs, palms down, flip your wrists to alternate tapping the back of your hand and palm against your thigh as quickly as you can. Repeat 20 times.
3. Stretch your fingers by spreading them apart as far as you can and hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Repeat eight times.
4. Fold your hands together; turn your palms away from your body while keeping your fingers interlocked and raise your arms overhead. Hold for 10 seconds.

It's a good idea to stop playing the game if his hands feel weak or if they ache, burn or tingle. The video game can wait.



Sources: American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. at www.aota.org, American Physical Therapy Association at www.apta.org, www.waldorflibrary.org



The Resource Link

The Student Conduct Process: A Guide for Parents From The Association for Student Judicial Affairs (ASJA)
www.asjaonline.org/en/art/?187

Whether your student has been involved with the campus conduct system or not, it can't hurt to learn more about this important system and what it means in your student's life. The Association for Student Judicial Affairs (ASJA) has developed a comprehensive, enlightening resource to explain student conduct nuances to parents. Here is how the guide is described on the ASJA website:

"ASJA created this guide in order to aid you in helping your student navigate the student conduct system at his/her college or university... This guide will focus on general procedures of most campus discipline processes, with particular emphasis on the difference between the campus process and criminal prosecution; goals of the conduct process; and student records and confidentiality. Additionally, the guide offers a general overview of the various types of misconduct with a focus on alcohol and drug offenses. It also includes some general advice you can use in working with your student who may be involved with the campus conduct system."

Of course, every school has different aspects to their student conduct system. Encourage your student to talk with a residence life staff member or a campus advisor to learn more about our specific system. This proactive step can help her avoid policy violations as she learns to make smarter, more informed decisions.



Melting Lamp Shades Cause “Close Calls”

A New York campus recently experienced two “close calls” involving a five-light multi-colored floor lamp, commonly

found in chain stores nationwide. In both cases, heat from the bulbs caused the light shades to melt. In one residence hall room, this caused

a build-up of toxic fumes and the melted plastic from the shade burned a hole in a bedspread.

In another room, within

15 minutes of turning on the light, a student witnessed the shade melt as the heat began to turn a poster on the wall brown. In both incidents, residential life staff determined that appropriate watt bulbs were being used in the lamps.

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) reported similar occurrences on other campuses, too. As a result, public awareness campaigns and an investigation by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) ensued.

This situation offers a good reminder about safety in the residence halls. While lists of “don’ts” in the halls may seem long, they are ultimately designed to keep community members safe. If your student has a question about whether an appliance is allowed in the halls, encourage him to ask residence life staff members instead of guessing. There are several items that are banned from residence halls because they have caused fires in the past—and no one wants a repeat. Looks like a five-light multi-colored floor lamp is now joining their ranks.

To view a photo of the lamp in question, visit www.fredonia.edu/admin/envhealth/webstuff/lamps.html or [www.monroec.edu/MCCannou.nsf/a7c8cce5ec85119d85256c29007260be/8794eb10220e5f558525726f004cbf83/\\$FILE/CFS%20Bulletin%20floor%20light.pdf](http://www.monroec.edu/MCCannou.nsf/a7c8cce5ec85119d85256c29007260be/8794eb10220e5f558525726f004cbf83/$FILE/CFS%20Bulletin%20floor%20light.pdf).

Some items typically banned from residence halls ...

- ✓ halogen lamps
- ✓ hot plates
- ✓ candles

Be sure to check with residence hall staff to determine what items are allowed.

Safety reminders to share with your student

A Safe Spring Break

Your student may be planning a Spring Break trip to another country or to a more local location. Either way, some simple safety reminders can help ensure that he has a good time—and stays safe in the process. Plus, you’ll likely feel better, knowing that you’ve had this talk...

- **Keep your wits about you**—Be smart with your personal safety and your property. Carry your wallet close to your body so you’re not targeted for pick pocketing. Don’t get so intoxicated that you make bad decisions and put yourself in dangerous situations. Keep a clear head in order to keep yourself—and your friends—safe.
- **Wear sunscreen**—If you’re doing an outdoor service project or lounging on the beach, sunscreen will prevent the burn that could ruin your break. Plus, it’ll save your skin in the long run.
- **Protect your eyes**—Wear sunglasses with proper UV protection and also have a hat. Too much sun can damage your eyes.
- **Keep physical risk to a minimum**—It may be appealing to dive into unknown waters or try new sports when on Spring Break. Just be sure that you’re with someone who knows what they’re doing. And don’t under-



take any risky events if you’re under the influence, as a loss of inhibitions and clouded judgment could easily result in you doing harm to yourself and others.

- **Don’t accept any drinks from unknown origins**—No one ever knows if a colorless, odorless liquid “date rape drug” like GHB or Ketamine has been slipped into the drink with ill intent. If you choose to drink, know where your drink is coming from, don’t drink from communal punch bowls and don’t trust strangers who give you drinks.
- **Use the buddy system**—In a new place, you’ll stay safest if you stick together. When you’re all getting ready to leave, account for everyone so that you don’t leave anyone behind!
- **Don’t go off with people you don’t know**—Trusting people you don’t know can end in tragedy. Stick with your friends and don’t take unnecessary risks.
- **Don’t do anything illegal**—The consequences are dire if you get arrested, especially in a foreign country. You could be detained, incur deep financial costs and run into complicated legal issues.

While this list may seem to “suck the fun” out of Spring Break, it’s really about helping your student tap into common sense so she can enjoy the time away.



The Season of Sneezing

This is the season to be sneezing! Share the following tips with your student to help prevent the onset of a cold:

- **Wash your hands—often!** It's the single most effective way to keep from catching a cold or spreading one to someone else.
- **Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.** The barrier helps keep germs contained.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** A healthy diet includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, balanced with the other major food groups. Sometimes a daily vitamin can offer a good supplement to a diet.

- **Get sleep!** Bodies need time to rest and recover—and to process all of the information learned in a given day.
- **Exercise—even if it's just a little—every day.** Walk up the stairs instead of taking the elevator, go for a short jog, or crank out some sit-ups and push-ups as a study break.
- **Don't let stress get to you.** College is a stressful time, especially near final exams. Find ways to manage the stress productively.



- **Avoid sharing with people who have colds.** This will greatly reduce the risk of catching a virus.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard your student works to maintain a healthy immune system, it's likely that he will contract a cold virus at one point or another. Therefore, in addition to being aware of healthy lifestyle strategies, he should be able

to recognize primary cold and flu symptoms and know when to seek medical assistance. Common cold symptoms include:

- ✓ a scratchy sore throat
- ✓ sneezing
- ✓ fatigue
- ✓ nasal drainage
- ✓ body aches
- ✓ a dry or productive cough

Colds persisting longer than two weeks or students experiencing symptoms such as a sudden fever, prominent headache or earache, extreme fatigue, and severe aches and pains could indicate an infection of the respiratory system caused by the flu.

If your student sounds like he might be coming down with a cold or flu, encourage him to visit the campus health center at the first sign of symptoms. While a cold or flu might seem like no big deal, it can be on a college campus! Your student's defenses may be down due to stress and fatigue, making it more challenging to beat the bug, plus it's easier to infect others when living in such close quarters.

Career-Oriented Books for Parents & Students

Jobs, internships and careers may be on your student's mind these days. They may also be on *your* mind! Here are several books that deal with students and careers—perhaps they can help:

- ❖ ***10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College* by William D. Coplin (2003)**
- ❖ ***Hand-Me-Down Dreams: How Families Influence Our Career Paths and How We Can Reclaim Them* by Mary H. Jacobsen, Sarah Silbert (Editor)**
- ❖ ***Helping Your College Student Succeed: The Parent's Crash Course in Career Planning* by Marcia B. Harris and Sharon L. Jones (1996)**
- ❖ ***The College to Career Road Map: A Four-Year Guide to Coaching Your Student (Parent Edition)* by Terese Corey Blanck, Peter Vogt and Judith Anderson (2006)**

