

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:

- Getting adjusted to college life for the first time (or once again) feelings of loneliness and homesickness
- Worries about being able to handle academic pressures and schedule
- Anxiety about perceived restrictions of campus policies
- Roommate adjustments and conflicts
- Money management struggles
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
- International students may feel confusion, vulnerability and lack of advocacy
- Lack of social life and lots of questions about how to get involved in new activities

Making the Most of Move-in Day

Are you feeling the stress yet? Preparing for move-in day—and actually moving your student in—can be a stressful time for families. The logistics can be difficult to plan out. Add emotions and nerves into the mix and tensions are certain to run high. Here are some tips to make move-in day go as smoothly as possible:

- ◆ Expect to experience—and witness—a range of emotions. While they aren't excuses for rudeness or disrespectful interactions, they can be at the root of a verbal or non-verbal exchange. For first-time students, they are probably feeling excitement, anxiety and even a little bit of fear. Returning students may be exhibiting a "too cool" attitude or have a "let's just get this over with" kind of mentality. Family members may be dealing with a whole host of adjustment issues of their own.
- ◆ Our residence halls will open on Sunday, August 23rd at 8am. Follow all campus directional signs to get to the appropriate residence hall. Listen to the staff members on hand to help you with moving in. Ignoring a well-thought out process designed to make move-in go smoothly makes things harder on everyone.
- ◆ Allow for more time than you think you will need. You'll want to have enough time to help your student unpack and arrange a little. Leave the final decorating and organization to your student and her roommate, though. You don't want to be too pushy. Besides, figuring this out from the get-go is part of what college is all about. You may want to take time to get to know your student's roommate and her family too. Planning to grab a bite to eat after both students are settled could serve as

a good transition for everyone.

- ◆ Be patient. Lots of people will be trying to do the same thing all at once. A friendly hello, door held or patient pause will go a long way.
- ◆ Plan for the weather. Be sure you know what to expect. If it's supposed to be hot, bring lots of water so you stay hydrated (campus vending machines may quickly run out of water). If it's supposed to rain, buy some cheap plastic ponchos, load everything up in plastic garbage bags, and grin and bear it.
- ◆ Prepare youngsters for the day. They will likely be very excited—at the beginning—but the day will wear on them. You won't want to feel pressured to leave because they are antsy or complaining they are bored. Pack along a surprise activity pack. Don't forget snacks too. A cranky, hungry—and bored—kid is sure to add stress to the day.

A Fun Move-in Day Idea

Take along a family member or friend whose sole responsibility is to record the day's events. What a great keepsake! Whether it's with a digital camera or a video camera, the memories captured will last a lifetime. Encourage the person to bring along a notepad and a pen too—there might be a chance to catch a funny quote for the day or to interview folks during some down time. A great digital or paper scrapbook could be created and sent to your student a few weeks after the semester starts—along with some friendly greetings from home—to remind him how much you love him.

The Challenges Ahead

When students head to school, they'll face an array of good times as well as plentiful challenges. Luckily, campus is full of folks who are here to help, while encouraging your student to accept responsibility for his actions at the same time. Chances are, you'll hear about some of these challenges as your student is facing them or after the fact. They may include:

- ◆ acclimating to a new academic program—college classes are different than those your student experienced in high school because professors will expect higher levels of independent work, showing up for class and academic dedication
- ◆ figuring out the social scene—getting to know others, finding a sense of belonging, doing things on weekends that feel right instead of just going along with the crowd... there are many social nuances that your student will be navigating along the way
- ◆ living with a roommate—compromise, letting go of pre-established expectations and learning to communicate effectively will help students establish the necessary rhythms to live with others
- ◆ navigating campus—learning a new place takes a while, as students determine where they can eat after athletic practice, how to get to their lab, what services the learning center provides and more
- ◆ being smart with free time—when to study, when to eat, when to sleep and when to hang out with others—these are all decisions that are in your student's hands now as they parcel out their free time to get important tasks done
- ◆ forming their identity—as students experience new freedoms, people and responsibilities, they'll also be exploring their own identity: who they are and who they hope to become... this can be one of the biggest—and most worthwhile — challenges of all

Some information adapted from the Dean of Student Affairs site at Skidmore College (NY), <http://cms.skidmore.edu/dean-students/parent.cfm>

Helping Your Student Face Challenges

- ◆ listen well without imposing your own thoughts right away
- ◆ ask what she has done to address an issue so far
- ◆ encourage him to take action on his own—it's a primary way he'll grow and gain confidence
- ◆ talk through scenarios to help her feel more comfortable
- ◆ ask open-ended questions that require answers beyond "yes" or "no"
- ◆ let him know that you love and support him—that can go a very long way!

Handling the Cash Flow

If your family is like many others right now, money is tight. And sending a student off to college isn't making things any easier. College is a great time for students to start practicing smart money habits. Many college students experience more freedom in college than they've ever had before. Unfortunately, in exercising this freedom, some college students go a little too far by mismanaging their funds or spending money they don't have.

You can help. Talk with your student about money before he heads off to school this semester. Here are some questions to get the conversation started:

- ◆ How much money are you planning on taking with you from your savings?
- ◆ What are you planning on spending your money on throughout the semester?
- ◆ Are you expecting to make any money this semester, and if so, approximately how much?
- ◆ Have you figured out a budget for yourself?
- ◆ What free on-campus opportunities can you take advantage of (i.e. pre-paid fees for student activities or recreation facilities, meal plan options, etc.)?
- ◆ Are there ways in which we can help offset costs?

Having this conversation now will help your student begin thinking about the reality of his financial situation. Your student might make mistakes! But, hopefully a little bit of foresight and planning will help your student make smart money decisions this year, especially in this tough economy.



Knowing When to Clam Up & Clue In: Being a Roommate Who Listens Well

Much of having a successful roommate relationship is about effective communication. And we're not just talking about talking. Listening is a significant part of the equation too. How is your student as a listener? Now's the time to find out.

As you well know, listening involves more than just hearing what someone is saying to you. To be an effective listener you need to be an active listener. Active listeners spend almost equal amounts of time talking and listening. Does your student know this? As he prepares to head off to build new relationships with roommates and peers, offer him these suggestions for being an effective listener:

- ◆ **Give Your Full Attention.** There are many things going on in the world, so it's easy to have your eyes wander or unintentionally listen in on another conversation happening right next to you. Do all you can to keep your eyes and your focus on the person who is speaking to you.
- ◆ **Listen with Your Mind as Well as Your Ears.** A common mistake people make when listening is they start to develop their response while the speaker is still finishing his thoughts. You are bound to miss something being said if you are worried about what you are going to say next. Stay in the moment.
- ◆ **Limit Advice.** Not everyone is seeking your ears for advice. Sometimes people just need to process through things to figure it out on their own. Be careful not to give advice before you are asked for it!
- ◆ **Be Patient.** The individual speaking to you has something important to share. Don't interrupt or respond before she has finished. Interruptions are frustrating and may appear as if you don't care or aren't interested.
- ◆ **It's Okay to Ask Questions.** Confirm what you think you are hearing by asking follow-up questions. Not only is it a good idea to repeat back what you understand the speaker to be sharing, it also demonstrates how well you are really listening.

- ◆ **Display Nonverbal Feedback.** Let the individual speaking know that you are really listening with a nod of the head, a laugh when appropriate and direct eye contact.

The Language of Listening: Nonverbal Cues

Language is spoken not only through words but also through actions. Consider using these tips to listen effectively with your body:

- ◆ **Lean Forward a Little**—Just a little lean can let a speaker know that he has your complete attention.
- ◆ **Show Emotion**—A smile, frown, raising of the eyebrows or tilting of the head can say, "I hear AND feel what you are saying."
- ◆ **Stay Open**—Keep your posture open. Avoid crossing of arms, legs or folding of hands.
- ◆ **Beware of Touch**—This can sometimes be tricky, especially when we are listening to someone who is experiencing some struggles. Be cautious of giving hugs or even extending an arm around a shoulder unless you are sure it will be received well – you listening may be all they need.

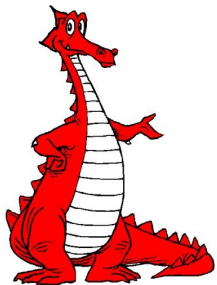
Answer Questions with Questions

One way to help without giving advice is by answering questions with questions. For example, if someone asks you which English class you think he should take, consider asking him some of the following questions to help him answer his own question:

- ◆ What types of literature are you most interested in?
- ◆ At what time of day would you prefer to have the class?
- ◆ What kind of classroom experience are you looking for?

Welcome Dragon Week!

Welcome Dragon Week is a series of events open to the entire campus community, welcoming students back to our campus. Attending these programs are a great way for your first year student to meet fellow classmates, and to get to know our campus. Encourage your student to look our for flyers advertising the events and to attend these programs!



8-23 **Block Party**, 8pm-11pm, Tobey Field

8-24 **The Adult Circus**, 8pm, Hunt Union Ballroom

8-25 **Pass Through the Pillars**, 7pm, Pillars of Old Main—Take part in a campus tradition as you mark the beginning of your time at Oneonta!

8-27 **Can You Find It?** 7pm, Wilsbach

8-28 **Under the Sea Casino Night**, 9pm, Hunt Union

8-29 **Late Night Event: Welcome Back Bash** 9pm, Hunt Union

9-2 **Club Expo** 6pm-8:30pm/Hunt Union— Come and learn about the clubs and organizations on campus!

9-4 **Red Day** Wear your red shirts to show your pride in the College!

9-5 **Campfest**, 1pm-4pm, College Camp- Buses will take you to College Camp, for an afternoon of fun and games!

Helping Students Get Outside of Their Comfort Zone

While it's good for students to tap into their strengths and talents at times, it's also a smart, brave thing for them to challenge themselves to go outside of their comfort zone. This can happen in little and small ways, especially at the beginning of an academic year. Here are some examples you can share with your student to help him extend himself beyond where he's most comfortable...

Comfort: Talking about sports.

Challenge: Talking about music, dance or any of the other arts.

Comfort: Spending time with people who are interested in and involved in the same things that you are.

Challenge: Spending time with someone who has very different interests and involvements than you do.

Comfort: Sitting back at meetings and taking things in.

Challenge: Forcing yourself to speak up and express your opinion on something.

Comfort: Emailing fellow students with news about a topic you're passionate about.

Challenge: Going door-to-door one night to spread the word instead.

It's those times when students feel uncomfortable and uncertain that they know they are likely growing and learning! Plus, now's the time for students to stretch beyond their comfort zone in preparation for working in a diverse work zone once they graduate. So, challenge your student to go beyond her comfort zone. In addition to being a better college student, she'll discover new things about herself in the process

Self-Challenge

You can share this self-challenge activity with your student before she heads off for school.

What are three areas where you'd like to stretch beyond your comfort zone? Jot them down, along with your reasons and desired outcomes, here.

#1

I'd like to stretch beyond my comfort zone when it comes to...

The reasons for this are...

What I hope to gain from the experience is...

#2

I'd like to stretch beyond my comfort zone when it comes to...

The reasons for this are...

What I hope to gain from the experience is...

#3

I'd like to stretch beyond my comfort zone when it comes to...

The reasons for this are...

What I hope to gain from the experience is...

Talk about these self-challenges with your student, too, so that you can support him and help hold him accountable along the way.

Computer Safety for Your Whole Family

It's not uncommon to hear about ergonomic concerns related to computer use—whether it's eye fatigue or pain in the fingers and wrists. But experts are finding that there are a host of other injuries, which are less commonly talked about, that happen too.

A recent news report indicated that a study published in the July issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine (Time.com, 6/9/09) tallied acute computer-caused injuries like cuts and bruises. According to the study, more than 9,000 Americans suffer from these types of injuries each year. Whether it was tripping over a computer cord, dropping a computer on their foot or experiencing some other computer-related trauma, 78,703 people visited hospital emergency rooms for treatment between 1994 and 2006. Who knew?

The majority of the computer-related injuries happened in homes. In all age groups, the most frequently diagnosed injury was laceration. Study authors were able to compile data on the type of activity that led to injury in some cases; in these, 50% of the incidents took place while someone was moving the computer or one of its components. In children, most of the injuries were a result of climbing on or playing near computer equipment.

The Center for Injury Research and Policy of the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital offers the following common-sense tips

for computer safety:

- ◆ Keep computer equipment away from the edges of desks and out of reach of young children.
- ◆ Place the computer away from walkways and on a sturdy surface.
- ◆ Organize and secure wires and cords out of the way.
- ◆ When moving a computer, make sure that the pathway is clear first.
- ◆ Use a cart or dolly, if available.
- ◆ Lift the computer straight up and carry it close to the body.
- ◆ Bend at the knees, rather than at the back, when picking up or putting down a computer; while carrying it, avoid twisting.

These tips are great not only for residence hall rooms, but your home as well.

Staying Safe: A Student's Guide

As you think about your student's needs at school, staying safe is one of the top concerns. In order to help him be safe while also being a responsible member of his community, you can remind him of the following:

Your Room

- ◆ Always lock your door, especially when you're inside sleeping or when you go out.
- ◆ Don't let strangers into your room.
- ◆ Don't post notes on your memo board, IM or voice-mail, saying where you are or providing personal info.
- ◆ Don't keep valuables in plain sight. And don't have too many valuables there with you in the first place!
- ◆ Don't give out your room key or ID card.

Parking Lots

- ◆ Have your car key in hand ready to put in the lock as you're walking toward your car.
- ◆ Walk out to your car with someone you know and trust, especially when it's dark.
- ◆ Look in the back seat before entering the car to make sure no one is hiding back there.
- ◆ Always keep your car locked, whether you're in it or not.
- ◆ Park as close as you can to your destination. If that's impossible, ask public safety for an escort.

- ◆ If you're sitting in your car in the parking lot, talking on the phone or whatever, lock the doors so no one can take you by surprise.

Isolated Areas

- ◆ If you have to work in an isolated lab, practice room or study lounge, tell someone or ask someone to come with you.

Date Rape & Sexual Assault

- ◆ Don't be alone with someone you just met.
- ◆ Clearly communicate your intentions—say “No” and mean it.
- ◆ Keep a level head. Alcohol or other drugs compromise your safety by lowering inhibitions and clouding your judgment.
- ◆ Be aware of date rape drugs that can be slipped into your drink.
- ◆ If you go somewhere with friends, make sure that everyone is accounted for before leaving.
- ◆ Trust your gut – your instincts say a lot.

Keep Your Stuff Safe

- ◆ Install a safety lock or tracker on your laptop.
- ◆ Don't leave your book bag unattended. Use a gym locker or carry it around the library with you.
- ◆ Always lock up your bike.
- ◆ Don't leave a large amount of cash in your room, even if it's “hidden” in your sock drawer.

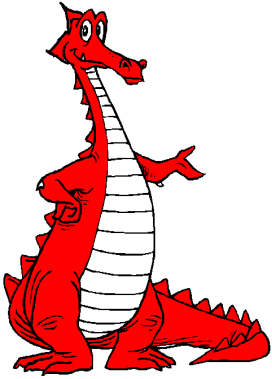
- ◆ Keep your blinds pulled at night and when you're out so potential thieves can't see what's “available” to them.
- ◆ If there's a campus engraving program, register your big-ticket items like laptops, TVs, DVRs, bikes and more.

Keep Yourself Safe

- ◆ Make it tough for someone to take you by surprise – don't wear ear buds or headphones when walking, running or studying alone.
- ◆ Head toward crowds, lights and buildings if you're being followed.
- ◆ Don't walk alone, especially after dark. Call the campus escort system or walk with friends. Stay on populated, well-lit paths.
- ◆ If someone is stalking you, report it to public safety immediately. A restraining order or some other action may need to be taken to keep you safe.
- ◆ Don't engage an unknown caller in conversation or give away any personal details. Keep track of when calls are made and what is said. Save voicemail messages, too. Turn everything over to staff members who can help.

Lost Room Keys/Cards

Report a lost room key or ID card to the appropriate staff immediately! Plus, when you share a space with a roommate(s), not reporting a lost key/card can end up causing them harm, too.



Dates to Remember

- ◆ September 25– College closes after last class
- ◆ September 30– Classes resume
- ◆ October 23-25- Homecoming and Family Weekend
- ◆ November 20- College closes after last class
- ◆ November 30-Classes resume
- ◆ December 14-18 Finals Week
- ◆ January 20– Spring 2010 classes begin
- ◆ February 19– College closes after last class
- ◆ March 1– Classes resume
- ◆ April 2– College closes after last class
- ◆ April 12– Classes resume
- ◆ May 13-19– Finals Week
- ◆ May 22– Commencement



Fill the Mailbox!

Getting mail can help your student acclimate to campus life while still knowing that people back home are thinking about her. Consider mailing items such as:

- ◆ postcards of campus
- ◆ fun flat things like mini-Chiclets, Pop Rocks and gum
- ◆ cards with supportive messages
- ◆ a movie rental coupon and some packets of microwave popcorn so he can invite others over for a movie night
- ◆ funny cartoons from the comics
- ◆ a school T-shirt from the campus bookstore
- ◆ cool school supplies like colored paperclips, fun pens and funky folders
- ◆ a photo of the family dog in a tutu or a sibling in a crazy outfit—something to make your student laugh and know she is being thought of from afar!



Looking Toward Parent/Family Weekend

Here are a few things to do to prepare for this upcoming weekend:

- ◆ Find a place to sleep, if you're planning to stay overnight
- ◆ Look through the campus listing of all there is to do that weekend
- ◆ Check with your student to see what he'd like to do during your visit
- ◆ Express the types of things you hope to do when on campus
- ◆ Determine if siblings and other relatives will be joining you
- ◆ Make meal reservations in town—it's a busy weekend!
- ◆ Ask your student if he'd like you to bring anything he needs to school and/or take anything back—that'll help you plan your vehicle space

We look forward to having you on campus with us!

Save the Date!
Homecoming and Family
Weekend
Friday October 23rd-Sunday
October 25th, 2008

See you soon!