



a newsletter for parents & families



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## Seasonal Student Issues

It's likely hitting your student now... he or she is heading to college in a few weeks. With that revelation will likely come some excitement – and some anxiety – regarding topics such as...

- Will people like me?
- Will I find friends as good as the ones I have now?
- How can I reinvent myself?
- Will I be able to handle college academics?
- How will I find my way around campus?
- Who will I turn to if I'm struggling?
- Will I still be as connected to my family & friends?
- What if I don't get along with my roommate?
- Will people make fun of how I talk/dress/act?
- How will I get involved?
- Will I find a place to belong here?

## How to Handle the First Month

The first month of school often sets the tone for the year ahead. Knowing some short cuts and tricks can help your student succeed in getting acclimated to campus.

### For instance...

If your student is **struggling with class material**, encourage him to talk with his professor during office hours, make a meeting with a TA, attend a study skills workshop and visit the learning center for tutoring assistance.

If your student is **feeling lonely or homesick**, encourage her to talk with a residence hall staff member, someone in campus ministry, a peer educator or a caring counselor in the counseling center.

If your student is **unsure how to get involved**, encourage him to check out organizational meetings, talk with returning students, seek the counsel

of trusted professionals on campus, participate in a service project and to just *try* something new.

If your student is **hoping to make new friends**, encourage him to reach out through simple efforts like inviting others to dinner, joining an intramurals team, saying hello to people in class and on campus, and being his genuine self instead of who he thinks he "should" be.

If your student is **wanting to become the best version of herself**, encourage her to pursue interests, stretch beyond her comfort zone, reach out to others, learn new things, listen well, meet campus faculty and staff, seek out a mentor and receive feedback willingly.

These efforts and more can help your student dig right into campus life in positive, productive ways!

### Other Tips

- Take a tour of the library to get familiar with resources
- Walk around campus to get the lay of the land
- Attend an organization fair to see what's available
- Go out for coffee with an orientation leader, RA or other peer leader to pick his/her brain
- Find a campus job to engage with others and make some money, too!



# Being a Friend or Roommate Who Listens Well

Effective communication is a major component of successful relationships. And this doesn't just mean talking! Listening is a significant part of the equation, too. How is your student as a listener? Now is the time to find out.

Being an effective listener involves *active* listening skills. Active listeners spend almost equal amounts of time talking and listening. Sharing this fact with your student can help him/her build strong relationships with roommates and other peers.

Here are some other suggestions to share regarding 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.



## 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?

**Stay in the Moment.** 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. So, 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 care-

ful 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 come across as if you don't care or aren't interested.

**Ask Follow-up 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 in nonverbal ways...

- **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 your arms, legs or folding your 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 the person needs.



## 25 Campus Safety Tips

Safety is a number one concern on campus. Here are 25 tips to help students keep themselves – and their communities – safe...

1. Make it tough for someone to take you by surprise – don't wear ear buds or headphones when walking, running or studying alone.
2. Head toward crowds, lights and buildings if you're being followed.
3. Don't walk alone, especially after dark. Walk with other people and stay on populated, well-lit paths.
4. If someone is stalking you, report it immediately so action can be taken to keep you safe.
5. 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.
6. Report a lost room key/card to the appropriate staff immediately! Someone can use it to gain entrance to your room, apartment or car to hurt you or your belongings.
7. Always lock your door, especially when you're inside sleeping or when you go out.
8. Don't let strangers into your room. Look through a peephole, ask for ID or meet them in the hallway.
9. Don't post notes on your memo board, Facebook or voicemail, saying where you are or providing personal info.



10. Don't keep valuables or cash in plain sight. And don't have too many valuables or too much cash there with you in the first place!
11. Don't give out your room key/card.
12. Install a safety lock or tracker on your laptop.
13. Don't leave your bag unattended. Use a locker or carry it around with you at all times.
14. Keep your blinds pulled at night and when you're out so potential thieves can't see what's "available" to them.
15. If there's a campus engraving program, register your big-ticket items like laptops, TVs, DVRs, bikes and more.
16. Have your car key in hand, ready to put in the lock, as you're walking toward your car.
17. Look in the backseat before entering the car to make sure no one is hiding back there.
18. Always keep your car locked, whether you're in it or not.
19. Try not to sit in your car in the parking lot, talking on the phone.

If you do, lock the doors so no one can take you by surprise.

20. If you have to work in an isolated lab, practice room or study lounge, tell someone or ask someone to come with you.
21. Don't be alone with someone you just met.
22. Clearly communicate your intentions – say "No" and mean it. And always listen to others' "No's" too.
23. Keep a level head. Alcohol or other drugs compromise your safety by lowering inhibitions and clouding your judgment.
24. If you go somewhere with friends, make sure that everyone is accounted for before leaving.
25. Trust your gut – your instincts say a lot.

### 5 Ways to Strike Up a Campus Conversation

1. Ask about the sports team or event listed on a person's T-shirt or baseball cap
2. Compliment someone on an insightful comment they made in class
3. Inquire where another student is from
4. Ask for directions
5. Show an interest in someone else's perspective



# The Power of Naps

In a society where we often tend to be sleep-deprived, short naps are becoming one tool to help improve mood, alertness and performance while reducing mistakes and accidents. They give us a way to relax and rejuvenate.

So, as your student establishes her sleep patterns at school this fall, jumping in bed for a brief nap could be a useful tool.

## Make the Most of That Nap

To get the most out of napping, the National Sleep Foundation offers the following tips...

**The Right Length.** Naps should be the right length, about 20-30 minutes, to maximize short-term alertness. This way, nappers won't get groggy or have a difficult time going to sleep that night.



**The Right Environment.** Naps should be in the right environment, where the temperature is comfortable, noise is limited and little light is filtering in.

**The Right Time.** Naps shouldn't be too late in the day, when they could affect nappers' nighttime sleep, or too early in the day, when

their bodies might not be ready for more sleep.

Getting good, consistent sleep at school is important for all students, as being overtired can cause moodiness, a lack of energy, stress, anger and a higher susceptibility to illness. Plus, it can result in difficulty retaining new information and a lack of concentration, two very essential skills that will help your student succeed academically. If tossing a nap into the mix sometimes helps, then it could be time to hit the pillow.

## Values and Decision-Making

When students head to college, their values will be tested. Decisions about a variety of things, from alcohol to intimacy to how to spend their time, will come up daily. That's why talking about values now – and throughout the year – can help students feel more comfortable with their decision-making.

Ask your student to consider his or her values on the following topics...

- Friendships
- How to treat others
- Ways to spend time
- Spirituality
- Attending religious services
- Health and wellness
- Intimacy and relationships
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Academic integrity
- Family connections
- Financial matters
- Studying

## Student Loan Management

In order to keep student loans in check, here are a few things to help your student keep in mind...

- Manage ALL of your money wisely – if you overspend, you're more likely to over-borrow.
- Borrow only what you need – remember that you'll have to pay about 30% more than you borrow, in interest, when you're paying back your loans.
- Ask yourself questions – consider how you can reduce expenses, if you can work during the school year and summer, and more.
- Use student loans to finance your education, not your lifestyle – because every dollar you're spending now will be more than a dollar that you'll have to pay back later.
- Look at all available loans – compare and contrast your options, and try to use alternative/private loans as a last resort.

Consider other sources – have you looked at scholarships, grants and work-study before borrowing?

Sources: Financial Planning, [about.com](http://about.com); [MappingYourFuture.org](http://MappingYourFuture.org)