



a newsletter for parents & families



May 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:

- Anxiety and tension due to realizations that the year is ending and final exams are about to occur
- Senior panic about jobs, finances, etc.
- First year students are feeling somewhat confident because they feel that they have made it through the first year (almost!)
- Good feelings are evident as summer is near
- Lots of cramming, studying and wrapping things up academically
- End of the year socialization
- Packing and checking out
- Saying goodbye to important people and putting closure on the year

## Eight Tips for Handling Conflict

Adjusting to having your student back home may result in some initial conflicts – between you and your student, friends, siblings or other family members.

While in the midst of this, it's important to remember that conflict itself is neutral. It's the behaviors of the individuals experiencing conflict that determines its value.

How we choose to deal with a conflict will directly determine the result. Dealing with conflicts in an unhealthy manner weakens relationships and makes getting to the "real issue" more difficult. When dealt with in a positive manner, however, conflict serves as a unique opportunity for growth, understanding and the strengthening of relationships.

Here are some conflict tips to share with your student...

1. Know the difference between your principles and your preferences.
2. Review your expectations. Are you being realistic? Is the person capable of changing in the way you desire? Can you adapt to the situation or is it totally unacceptable?
3. Listen! Hear the other person's feelings as well as arguments. Don't interrupt.
4. Accept the right of the other person to a satisfactory solution to



the problem. Recognize that this person has legitimate rights that must be respected.

5. State your opinions and feelings frankly but calmly. Be assertive, not aggressive.
6. Don't start the conversation with your mind made up. Avoiding assumptions is the key to understanding. If you don't, a constructive solution is almost always impossible.
7. Don't try to win. Winning arguments inflates the ego but doesn't solve problems. Being smarter than someone else is not important; being smart enough to solve a serious problem is very important – and very smart!
8. Practice the power of optimism. What you think is often what you'll get.

All the best handling conflicts with care so you and your student can enjoy a peaceful, civil summer.



# The Dangers of Drowsy Driving

Drowsy driving is more than just falling asleep at the wheel. It also includes drivers being so tired that their response time and ability to perceive risky situations is slowed way down. Sleepiness often “slows reaction time, decreases awareness, impairs judgment and increases your risk of crashing,” according to the National Sleep Foundation’s (NSF) DrowsyDriving.org site. Every year, fatigued drivers cause approximately 100,000 crashes, with 55% of those drivers being under 25 years old.

Being this tired can be just as dangerous as drinking and driving – being awake for 18 hours is equal to a blood alcohol concentration of .08%, which is legally drunk. And injuries received in drowsy driving accidents tend to be serious or fatal, the site warns.

As students come home for the summer and engage in their summer patterns of working, seeing friends, driving to events and more, it’s important to make them aware of how dangerous drowsy driving can be. And a key realization is what causes this type of drowsiness in the first place. The NSF says there are many underlying causes of sleepiness, fatigue and drowsy driving, including...

- Sleep-deprivation or fatigue – less than 6 hours of sleep triples your risk
- Chronic sleep debt (insomnia, interrupted or fragmented sleep)
- Driving long distances without proper rest breaks
- Driving through times when you’d normally be asleep
- Work schedules that may impact circadian rhythms (shift work, more than one job) – more than 60 hours/week increases risk by 40%
- Time spent on a task

- Undiagnosed or untreated sleep disorders
- Driving alone or on a long, dark, rural or boring road
- The use of sedating medications (cold tablets, antidepressants, antihistamines)
- Consuming alcohol when you’re already tired

## Tips for Prevention

So, in order to prevent drowsy driving, encourage your student to...

**Get a good night’s sleep.** The average person requires about 8 hours of sleep a night. Plan to drive during times of day when you are normally awake and stay overnight rather than traveling straight through.

**Avoid driving during your body’s “down time.”** Take a mid-afternoon break and find a place to sleep between midnight and 6 a.m.

**Have a companion for a long trip.** Passengers can talk with you,



help look for early warning signs of fatigue and provide a change of drivers when needed. If you don’t have a companion, try organizing a carpool via a campus ride board.

**Stop regularly.** Schedule regular stops every 100 miles or two hours.

**Avoid alcohol and medications that may impair performance.** Alcohol interacts with fatigue; increasing its effects – just like drinking on an empty stomach.

Before your student climbs in a car, alert him to the dangers that drowsy driving may have for him and others. And be aware of the dangers yourself, should you head off to pick up your student after a busy work-week. Caution is key.

## Danger Signs on the Road

If these things occur, students should get off the road immediately before they fall asleep and/or get into a drowsy driving crash...

- Wandering or disconnected thoughts; daydreaming
- Drifting from your lane or hitting a rumble strip
- Repeatedly jerking your vehicle back into the lane
- Tailgating
- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking or heavy eyelids
- Missing exits or traffic signs
- Feeling restless and irritable
- Yawning repeatedly or rubbing your eyes
- Having difficulty keeping eyes open and focused
- Not remembering the last few miles
- Having trouble keeping your head up

Sources: [www.powersleep.org](http://www.powersleep.org); [www.drowsydriving.org](http://www.drowsydriving.org)



## Saying Goodbye: A Possible Grief Trigger

When students say goodbye to close college friends – especially those who may not be returning to school next year – it can take a toll. They may go through a period of mourning that includes the stages of grief. No, their friend didn't die, yet the relationship will never be the same. And the grief that may go into that realization is very real.

In order to help students through these stages of grief, here is a list of what they may be experiencing...

1. **Denial**—denying or refusing to believe that the incident or event happened.
2. **Anger**—feelings of frustration, agitation and anger, which can sometimes lead to blaming others (even those not necessarily responsible) or the desire to “get even.”
3. **Bargaining**—better known as guilt. In fact, individuals experiencing this stage often blame and burden themselves with feelings of excessive amounts of guilt and/or regret.
4. **Depression**—during this stage, individuals may experience a lapse in routine, trouble sleep-

ing, and/or feelings of “numbness” or sadness.

5. **Acceptance**—admitting the incident occurred and accepting the reality of the situation.

College friendships are some intense relationships, often built partially around proximity as students live together in close quarters. When these friendships undergo a separation period, students may be

impacted in various ways. Some will spend more time within one stage of grief than another. And some may not show their emotions very much – perhaps stuck in the denial stage for a period of time.

Understanding the process that students may be going through once they say goodbye to close friends can help you support them during the transition.

### 10 Things Your Student Needs to Hear During Finals Week

1. “We’re behind you.”
2. “Do your best and show them what you’ve got.”
3. “Sleep, fresh air and eating well are important, too. You can’t study ALL the time!”
4. “Call or Facetime if you need to talk.”
5. “We believe in you.”
6. “Focus during these last few weeks and summer break will feel even more worthwhile.”
7. “I KNOW you’ve got it in you!”
8. “We’re looking forward to having you home.”
9. “We’ll celebrate when you’re done!”
10. “You can do this. I know you can.”

## Treat Injuries with “RICE”

As summer approaches, chances are that you and your student will get out there to engage in more activity, from walking to soccer to tennis. Be sure to warm up before diving right in. And, if someone gets injured, it's good to know about the RICE model.

### The RICE model includes...

**Rest:** Reduce or stop using the injured area for at least 48 hours. If

you have a leg injury, you may need to stay off of it completely.

**Ice:** Put an ice pack on the injured area for 20 minutes at a time, 4 to 8 times per day. Use a cold pack, ice bag or a plastic bag filled with crushed ice that has been wrapped in a towel.

**Compression:** Ask the doctor about elastics wraps, air casts, special

boots or splints that can be used to compress an injured ankle, knee or wrist to reduce swelling.

**Elevation:** Keep the injured area elevated above the level of the heart to help decrease swelling. Use a pillow to help elevate an injured limb.

**Source:** [www.niams.nih.gov/hi/topics/child-sports/child\\_sports.htm](http://www.niams.nih.gov/hi/topics/child-sports/child_sports.htm)



# Having the Money Conversation

As you and your student ready for the summer ahead, it makes good sense to talk about money. You may want to discuss earning expectations during the summer, savings strategies or what’s needed to make next year’s tuition work.

Whatever the case may be, conversations about money can provide great growth opportunities for students. They become more aware and better understand where you are coming from, too. The key is keeping these conversations civil, caring and clear.

So, here are some things to take into consideration when discussing finances with your student...

**The Emotions.** Realize that money can become an emotional issue at times, since it’s so tied into one’s sense of well-being and, at times, self-worth.

**No Interruptions.** Set aside uninterrupted time, with any paperwork spread out in front of you, so you can really delve into budgetary details with your student.

**Be Forthcoming.** Recognize your tendency to want to protect your student from some financial realities, yet balance it with the

importance of including her in these sometimes-difficult conversations – it’s an important part of her maturation process.

**Stay Calm.** If anyone gets frustrated or angry, disperse and come back when folks are calm. You may even want to try talking about what triggered the upset in the first place so you’re all better aware.

**Say “I.”** Use “I” statements as much as possible (“I feel like you are working so hard to help pay the bills that you’re not able to get involved in some important parts of college life. Let’s figure how we can alleviate some of that pressure on you...”).



**Be Realistic.** Talk about realistic things you can all do to address the current financial situation – from where your student can cut back to loans you might consider – as part of an “all hands on deck” collaborative approach.

## Wants vs. Needs

Being able to distinguish between “wants” and “needs” is a main thing students need to learn in their quest for financial fitness. By talking in these terms, you can help them really look at their spending habits.

For instance, textbooks = a need. A college sweatshirt = a want. A cup of coffee may feel like a need, yet a latte or fancy coffee drink is definitely a want. Have them self-identify wants and needs that they’ve spent money on in the past month to really raise their awareness. By helping your student use the “wants vs. needs” filter as he’s making financial decisions, it’s a practice that’ll soon become a habit.

## Staying Safe While Socializing

End of the year socialization – from celebrating the end of classes to sending graduating friends off with good cheer – is often a part of what May is all about. You can help your student stay safe while still having fun by offering these gentle reminders...

- Always be with a group of trusted friends and look out for one another
- Don’t get in a car with anyone who has been drinking
- Don’t lose your inhibitions or ability to keep yourself safe
- Don’t let anyone pressure you to drink or do drugs
- Wear sunscreen and stay hydrated when out in the sun
- Keep track of your phone and wallet at all times
- Contact someone if you or a friend is in trouble – don’t wait!