



July 2011

## 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:

- ▲ Feeling sad about leaving established friends and family at home
- ▲ Concern about issues of "belonging" and finding a comfortable place on campus
- ▲ Excitement coupled with anxiety about making a fresh start
- ▲ Worry about academics being "hard" and beyond their abilities
- ▲ Thinking about what type of first impression they'll make
- ▲ Concern about roommates and housing (if living on campus)
- ▲ Wondering what to pack and what to leave at home since space will be limited
- ▲ Possibly transitioning into a long-distance relationship or deciding to end a current relationship
- ▲ Financial worries—wondering if they'll be able to make enough during the summer and also how much they'll need to work once school begins

## Helping Your Student Ask for Help

Countless numbers of people have a tough time asking for help—even the most seasoned professionals. For some reason, asking for help makes many people feel weak or vulnerable. Let's view asking for help in a different light: strength of character. Those who have the courage to ask for help show that they aren't afraid to admit that they don't know everything. Sometimes, especially when they are really struggling, students forget that those who work on campus expect that students don't know everything. So...that means that these very same professionals expect that they'll ask for help.

That being said, how does one who isn't the most comfortable asking for help go about doing so? Consider sharing these thoughts with your student as he prepares for school this fall.

Remember that even the best leaders have help. Even the President of the United States surrounds himself with the best staff he can. We don't view this as a weakness, do we? If he can ask for help, you most certainly can too.

Recognize your strengths and your limitations. Nobody is perfect. What do you do really well? In what areas do you typically struggle? Take stock of what you do well and let those

around you know. This may help them feel more comfortable asking you for help when they need it. And find out what they do well so you can tap into their strengths too. Remember, no one can go at it alone. Teamwork is where it's at.

Those who have the courage to ask for help show that they aren't afraid to admit that they don't know everything.

Be honest when you are in over your head. There will be times when you can't do everything alone. When this happens, be honest with yourself and others. Nobody can do it all and there will be times when you have to prioritize. When you communicate this to others, they are more likely to be supportive and understanding.

Take stock of the resources on hand. Campus communities are chock full of great folks! More often than not—no matter what the issue at hand—an expert can be found right in front of you who can offer assistance. Why not take advantage of this? You'll meet more people, you'll be learning more about your environ-

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## Tools You Can Use

Here are several websites that you might find helpful:

### College Parents of America

According to their website, College Parents of America ([www.collegeparents.org/](http://www.collegeparents.org/)) is the only membership organization of current and future college parents in the United States. Founded in 1997, their mission is to assist families in the successful preparation, transition, adjustment and completion through college. College Parents of America provides its members with the advantage of valuable benefits and advocacy that protect and maximize their family's college investment and the resources to support their student's achievement.

### JobWeb

Have you checked it out? JobWeb ([www.jobweb.com](http://www.jobweb.com)) is a great resource parents can use to support their student with career, internship and job planning.

According to the JobWeb website, the organization offers the following resources specifically for parents to help them take an active role in helping their student secure a satisfying and rewarding first job and career:

- **Job Market:** A place parents can go to find out who is hiring and where the jobs are.
- **Salary:** A place where parents can get the latest information on starting salary offers.
- **Careers 411:** A place where parents can access articles written specifically for them on how they can contribute to their col-

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## 6 Ways to Make Orientation Count

### Getting the Most Out of This Important Experience

As you and your student head to campus for orientation, keep a few tips in mind:

- **Take in as much as you can.** Attend various sessions, talk with campus staff and students, and get an overall sense for what this institution is all about.
- **Engage.** Meet other parents, ask questions and get involved in what's going on. It's one of the best ways to start feeling like a true part of the campus community.
- **Encourage your student to explore on her own.** There will likely be separate sessions for students and parents/families. Go off to your different workshops and then come back together to share notes!
- **Look to the staff for guidance.** There are so many people at orientation who are there to make this a great experience for you and your student. Try not to stress about the little things and allow the campus staff to lend a hand.
- **Ask Questions.** There's no such thing as a dumb question at orientation—the campus staff is here to provide answers!
- **Put your student first.** Orientation is about helping your student navigate the lay of the land and get more comfortable before classes kick in. Encourage, support and cheer her on during this important first step.

Orientation is a great chance to ease the nerves for all—students and families alike. Take advantage of the opportunities presented to you and enjoy this important time.

### Questions to Consider Asking

Now's the time to seek out answers to those nagging questions you've had on your mind...

- ▲ What can I do to encourage my student to keep herself safe on campus?
- ▲ What is your policy on alcohol and other drugs?
- ▲ What happens if my student doesn't like her roommate?
- ▲ Will my student be behind her classmates if she isn't ready to declare a major?
- ▲ Who can I call if I need help?
- ▲ How can I best support my student during the upcoming months?



## Tools You Can Use

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lege-age children's career development.

- **Making Magic: New and Emerging Occupations:** A place where parents can learn about emerging occupations in today's global market.
- **JobWeb Newsletter:** A free, monthly e-newsletter for students with the latest information on the job market and starting salaries, and tips for the job search.

## The Transition Year

The Transition Year ([www.transitionyear.org](http://www.transitionyear.org)) is an online resource center designed to help parents and students focus on emotional health before, during and after the college transition. You might find this site useful as a tool for discussing important issues with your student over the next couple of months.

## Ask for Help

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ment and you'll be healthier in the long run. It's a win-win-win for all involved.

Let others know when you've asked for help. Why hide it? When you let others see that you are willing to get help when you need it, you role model healthy behavior. Some folks really do have difficulty reaching out to others and admitting they need assistance. By being honest when you reach out, you are setting a great example for those around you.

Remind your student: When you help yourself, you are in the best position to help others. This simple mantra is a life lesson and as you well know, the earlier learned, the better.

## A Recommended Reading List

As you prepare to send your student off to school in the fall, it's likely that you'll have a lot of questions and concerns. The following books are commonly recommended to parents as they provide valuable tips about the college experience:

- **The iConnected Parent: Staying Close to Your Kids in College (and Beyond) While Letting Them Grow Up** by Barbara Hofer and Abigail Moore (2010)
- **Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understanding the College Years** by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger (2009)
- **You're On Your Own (But I'm Here If You Need Me): Mentoring Your Child During the College Years** by Marjorie Savage (2009)
- **A New Beginning: A Survival Guide for Parents of College Freshmen** by Kaye B. McGary (2008)
- **The Parent's Crash Course in Career Planning** by Marcia B. Harris and Sharon L. Jones (2007)
- **25 Ways to Make College Pay off: Advice for Anxious Parents from a Professor Who's Seen It All** by Bill Coplin (2007)
- **I'll Miss You Too** by Margo E. Bane Woodacre, MSW & Stephanie Bane (2006)
- **Parents' Guide To College Life: 181 Straight Answers on Everything You Can Expect Over the Next Four Years** by Robin Raskin (2006)
- **Making the Most of College—Students Speak their Minds** by Richard J. Light (2004)
- **Empty Nest...Full Heart: The Journey from Home to College** by Andrea Van Steenhouse (2002)
- **The Launching Years: Strategies for Parenting from Senior to College Life** by Laura Kastner and Jennifer Fugett Wyatt (2002)
- **The Myth of Maturity: What Teenagers Need from Parents to Become Adults** by Terri Apter (2002)
- **Let the Journey Begin: A Parent's Monthly Guide to the College Experience** by Jacqueline Kiernan MacKay and Wanda Johnson Ingram (2001)
- **Don't Tell Me What to Do, Just Send Money** by Helen E. Johnson and Christine Schelhas-Miller (2000)
- **When Your Kid Goes to College: A Parent's Survival Guide** by Carol Barkin (1999)
- **Almost Grown: Launching Your Child from High School to College** by Patricia Pasick (1998)
- **The Truth About College: 50 Lessons for Parents Before They Start Writing Checks** by Will Keim (1997)
- **Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Today's College Experience** by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger (1992)
- **When Kids Go to College: A Parent's Guide to Changing Relationships** by Barbara Newman and Philip Newman (1992)

These books can be helpful not only to you now, but as your relationship with your student grows and changes over the next number of years.



# Encouraging Positive Self-Esteem in Your Student

**S**elf-esteem is a belief in one's self, or self-respect. And according to many experts, it is something that often eludes many college students. For one reason or another, many young people suffer from a lack of self-esteem, which can affect how they adjust to college life and function as students.

## What are some of the signs of healthy self-esteem?

People who have a healthy sense of self-esteem, generally speaking, will feel competent in their ability to cope with life's ever-changing situations. They trust their judgment in most matters and know where to get help when a particular challenge arises. They feel capable of making sound, responsible choices and can handle change when it occurs. All these characteristics lend themselves to a general state of happiness and contentedness. But healthy self-esteem is not egotism. It is never a feeling of superiority over others. In fact, if a person seems to need to remind others of his talents or skills, it could be a symptom of someone who is trying to compensate for a lack of self-esteem.

## What can you expect this year?

At the college level, issues of self-confidence and competence can surface for the first time as students try to adjust to an unfamiliar setting and challenging academic expectations. The good student might have to work harder to maintain the same grade point average, while the mediocre student might start off with strong concerns about being good enough to make it at all. Being away from home can also contribute to an unsettled feeling and an otherwise self-confident young adult might show signs of insecurity and emotional withdrawal for the first time in his life.

Students are adjusting to a new social scene as well. Their relationships with friends from home are changing even as new relationships are developing. It takes time for students to find their voice and identity in a different setting.

## What helps?

These dips in self-esteem are normal when people face new challenges. As students continue their academic and social pursuits, and begin to enjoy some degree of success, their self-esteem levels often start to rise again. Things will likely get better if they:

**Build on pre-existing strengths.** All students have competencies in various areas and often just need to be reminded of them, especially as they're being challenged right and left by new things on campus. By helping them focus on their strengths rather than weaknesses, they can grow in self-esteem and self-confidence.

**Avoid comparisons with others.** No matter what we do in life and no matter how hard we try, there is

always someone who can do it better. If your student is struggling with self-esteem and begins to look around at others who have greater skills and achievements, he may back himself into a dangerous psychological corner—and quickly. It's your student's responsibility only to try his best. From that effort alone he can find personal satisfaction and a healthy sense of pride. Remind your student that he doesn't have to

be the best at something in order to be a valuable asset to the campus community.

**Try new things.** Your student can never know about a hidden talent or personal strength if he

never tries new things. Now is the time for healthy experimentation, whether it involves a different academic area, a new responsibility, a new interest or hobby, or even a new group of friends. Your student—and you—might be surprised to find what interests or talents are just waiting to be discovered.



## What Will Your Student's Send Off Look Like?

Family and friends will likely want to send your student off to college with good wishes. However, the week or two before he leaves can be hectic! So, consider planning your send-offs now, before things get crazy, whether it's a family dinner, a visit to grandparents or a picnic at the local park.

And realize that it'll be tough to get "quality time" during move-in day because there are so many other competing priorities. Students can naturally feel stressed and stretched during this time—anything you can do to alleviate that will be welcomed!