



a newsletter for parents & families

TROY

UNIVERSITY

February 2013

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:

- Difficulty getting into study mode
- Things become routine... school finally becomes home
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
- Cabin fever and burnout
- Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- Valentine's Day depression if not dating
- Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety
- Spring break planning underway

Gearing Up for the Months Ahead

Your student will likely be in decision-making mode these next few months, as she seeks opportunities and determines intentional directions for her life. Here are some key decisions possibly on her plate...

Choosing a Major. If your student is in her second year, she'll likely have to declare a major. This involves looking at her learning, her future goals, classes she has enjoyed and more. Remind her that her academic advisor, as well as other campus professionals, can help her make this type of decision.

Seeking an Internship or Purposeful Summer Work. Finding work or an internship that allows your student to explore her major and interests is just *smart*. She'll need to make contacts, consult with folks in career services and beyond, create a resume and get her name out there. Making the most of the summer will help her be ahead of the pack.

Figuring Out Spring Break. How will your student spend her spring break? Being intentional with this chunk of time can definitely work to her benefit. Perhaps she'll go on a service trip, do informational interviews for summer jobs/internships, shadow someone in a profession that interests her... Planning can ensure

that she doesn't waste this valuable week!

Conversations, loving challenges and support can give your student added strength during this decision-heavy time of year.

How You Can Help

As your student weighs pros and cons or tries to figure out where to start, you can help.

Ask Questions. Instead of just hoping your student will do good things for herself, ask intentional questions to help her along. They might include starters like, "So, what are you thinking about for the summer?" or "How can I help you weigh your options for a major?"

Be a Sounding Board. While it's important for students to learn to make their own decisions, they often need a sounding board as they bounce around possibilities. You're up!

Offer Support. Let your student know that you believe in her and are there to help her make positive decisions. Opening the door in supportive ways can give her the positive nudge she may need.



A Valentine's Day Heart-to-Heart

Love is on many people's minds as Valentine's Day creeps ever closer. Your student may be one of those people, whether he is in a relationship or not. The influx of lacey hearts and lovey paraphernalia can make uncoupled students feel crummy while folks in couples may feel pressured.

So, to make Valentine's Day an overall celebration of all kinds of love, here are a few things you can do:

Get Pet

Smart. Send a photo of the family dog, with a bubble coming out of her mouth saying something like, "I forget how much I miss you when you're gone!"



Take Care of Your Heart. Make a pact with your student that you're going to take advantage of the Valentine's Day emphasis on hearts to both take better care of your own hearts, whether through adding 1,000 steps a day, signing up for an aerobic activity or checking out the American Heart Association's resources at www.heart.org.

Lonely or Depressed?

Also realize that, despite your best efforts, your student may still feel lonely and depressed this Valentine's Day. If you sense that she isn't handling it well and that it's more than a "passing thing," encourage her to visit the campus counseling center, where she'll find good folks who love students and want to help them live happy, healthy lives.

Converse with Conversation

Hearts. Send a pack of conversation hearts and challenge your student to make up a story using the phrases on them. Now you try. Fun!

Put Together a Valentine-Making Party. Send a pack of Valentine-making goodies, from stickers to doilies to fun scrapbooking paper.

This will allow your student to hold her very own Valentine-making party with friends as a way to focus on

love beyond just coupledness!

Capture Love Songs.

Next time you're on the phone, go back and forth with your student to see how many songs you can come up

with that have the word "love" in the title. You'll have a laugh plus you'll each learn more about one another's music this way, too!

Sic the Siblings. Drawings, phone calls or funny emails from brothers and sisters can be great distractions for most students. It also reminds them of others who love them and are on their side.

Create a "Love Collage." Cut out a few magazine pictures or family/friend photos to make a "Love Collage" for your student. This will emphasize the many different types of love that make his world richer! On Valentine's Day, it can be easy to focus on what he doesn't have (a relationship) but you'll be helping him shift his attitude.

There are all sorts of ways to connect with your college student. Consider a Valentine's Day heart-to-heart today!

Happy Chinese New Year!

The Chinese New Year for 2013 begins on February 10 and ends 15 days later with the Lantern Festival. The Chinese calendar is close to 5,000 years old. It is made up of 12-year cycles, with each year named after an animal. People supposedly possess characteristics of the animal in the year of their birth. So, as the Year of the Snake races in, you can use the following chart to determine where you and your student fall in the grand scheme of things. You just might learn something about one another!

- ▶ Year of the Tiger – born in 1974
- ▶ Year of the Rabbit – born in 1975
- ▶ Year of the Dragon – born in 1976
- ▶ Year of the Snake – born in 1977
- ▶ Year of the Horse – born in 1978
- ▶ Year of the Sheep – born in 1979
- ▶ Year of the Monkey – born in 1980
- ▶ Year of the Rooster – born in 1981
- ▶ Year of the Dog – born in 1982
- ▶ Year of the Pig – born in 1983
- ▶ Year of the Rat – born in 1984
- ▶ Year of the Ox – born in 1985

(Add or subtract 12 years from any of these dates if you don't see your birth date represented.)

Visit the Chinese Culture Center's page at www.c-c-c.org/menu-resources/zodiac/ to learn more about the legend of these 12 animals and the characteristics of each.

Sources: About.com Chinese New Year Calendar 2013; www.c-c-c.org/menu-resources/zodiac/



Connecting Over Black History Month

February is Black History Month and your student can raise his awareness by attending campus and community events and discussions. You can also connect with your student over this important theme month by...

- ▶ Sharing some trivia questions (see box) to see how much you can educate one another.
- ▶ Talking about Black leaders, literary figures, those in the arts/sports/politics, etc. and sharing what you admire about these people and why.
- ▶ Asking your student what she is learning about Black history in class or through programs happening on campus.

Not only is Black History Month a cause for celebration, it's also a chance for education, awareness raising and connection!

Ready to Study

Getting back in the school swing of things after winter break can take some doing. You can encourage your student to:

- Find a new place to study
- Keep up with readings from the beginning
- Visit the learning center/a tutor now to address an academic concern from last term (i.e. test anxiety, writing assistance, etc.)
- Get to know her professors
- Limit online diversions when using a computer, iPad, etc.
- Use a reward system that works for him

And ask him about some things that he is learning when you see each other or talk on the phone. Having to articulate *what* he is learning can help him solidify that knowledge – and appreciate it even more.



Black History Month Questions

Questions:

1. Why was February chosen as Black History Month?
2. In what year did Black History Month begin (after being Black History Week)?
3. Which civil rights leader became the first African-American to make a serious bid for the U.S. presidency when he ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1983?
4. Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Black Studies at Cal. State University, created _____ as a way to unite the African-American community after the Watts riots in L.A.
5. Who was known as the “Moses of her people,” helping more than 300 slaves escape via the Underground Railroad?
6. Which Black track-and-field athlete won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, thus derailing Adolf Hitler’s intent to use the Olympic Games as a display of Arian supremacy?
7. Which black broadcaster and author hosts his own radio and TV shows?

Answers:

1. Because it contained the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, two men who made a significant impact on Black history.
2. In 1976, the celebration was expanded to the entire month of February.
3. The Rev. Jesse Jackson
4. He created the well-known holiday of Kwanzaa, which is celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, in 1966.
5. Harriet Tubman
6. Jesse Owens
7. Tavis Smiley





Effective Time Management for a New Term

Time marches on – sometimes much too quickly. College students understand this as well as anybody. Unfortunately, what they don’t always understand quite so well is how to effectively manage the hours in their day.

Now is a great time for your student to look at bad habits and to figure how he can be much smarter about maximizing his time. You can help by asking a few questions...

How much time do you spend sorting through “stuff”?

Ever heard the saying, “Stuff steals time”? Your student may find this to be true every time she’s shifting through her desk pile or searching through her overloaded backpack. Encourage her to spend 30 minutes each week filing papers away, organizing her computer and sorting through stuff so she knows where everything is. Getting in this practice can help stop the stuff shuffle for good!

How much time do you spend online?

A “5-minute check” can easily turn into an hour online. To save time, encourage your student to only check email or Facebook a few times each day, instead of responding to everything. Suggest that he turn off the sound on his phone or computer if that’ll help. And encourage him to play “beat the clock” when he gets online to research – only giving himself 30 minutes to get in and get out. That kind of incentive can make him more aware of how quickly the clock is ticking.

How much time does other technology gobble up?

Ask your student to think about how much texting, chatting, TV-watching and video game-playing she’s doing. These techy pursuits are fine, in moderation. Just encourage your student to be smart about how she consumes them. Maybe she doesn’t need to call her friend every day. Maybe she can

Time Management Advantages

- ▶ You gain time
- ▶ You get more sleep
- ▶ You feel more motivated
- ▶ You don’t get lost in “stuff”
- ▶ You reduce avoidance
- ▶ You don’t cram as much
- ▶ You feel less anxious
- ▶ You are more productive

Source: www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/time.html

watch TV shows online for free, thus cutting back on time wasted by commercials. There are options!

Time is our most precious commodity. As your student thinks about what he wants this term to be all about, it’s important for him to look at how he’s spending his time. Sometimes old habits need to be bumped to make room for new experiences.

Finding a Way In

“They all *know* each other already!” You may hear your student say this about people he’s living with, members of an organization and more.

It’s part of breaking through established groups in the second half of the year. And while it can be tough at times, it’s certainly not impossible!

If your student needs a push to break through and find a place to belong, you can suggest...

- **Finding a Guide.** Chances are your student knows someone in an organization or who is part of an intramurals team. If he asks, that person can serve as his initial “in” to introduce him to the group.
- **Making Invitations.** Even though it may seem like everyone is established already, there are always people open to meeting others. So, encourage your student to invite some people from class or the residence hall to coffee. They may then turn around and start inviting her, too!
- **Focusing on Strengths.** What is it that makes your student feel confident? It may be his artistic abilities, his way with budgets or just his aptitude for learning new things. If he focuses on these strengths and what they can add to a group, it can give him a more comfortable way in, as he emphasizes what *he* can do for the organization, rather than just what it can do for him.
- **Just Getting Out There.** Sometimes, taking the plunge to try something outside of our comfort zone can reap the best rewards. Remind your student of this fact as she puts herself out there to meet new people – and break on through.