



a newsletter for parents & families

TROY

UNIVERSITY

May 2012

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 have almost made it through the first year
- 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

Separating from a Family of Friends

As students grow into adulthood, a natural sign of independence is that they begin creating a second family made up of good friends. There may be the roommate who "feels like a sister to me" or the friend from intramural basketball who "I love like a brother."

By developing these bonds, your student isn't saying that her primary family isn't important. She's simply surrounding herself with even more supportive, loving partners to help her get through life's ups and downs – while she helps them do the same. It's a sign of maturity and of positive relationship building.

Part of this friendship-making process is mourning the separation when summer comes. Being separated from college friends during the summer hiatus can be traumatic and troubling for students. Bonds develop quickly and strongly during the year, as students experience everything together, from classes to meals to deep 2 a.m. conversations in the laundry room. So, when the end of the year rolls

around and it's time to say goodbye, it's natural to expect that your student may have some trouble. Talk with him about it, work together to figure out ways he can stay connected with these friends from afar and applaud the fact that he has connected with others so well. This is a sign that he's developing genuine friendships at school filled with give and take.

A Tough Transition

Students not returning to school next year may have a particularly tough time saying goodbye to their campus friends. And you'll likely be privy to some of these emotional scenes, as they play out during graduation, the packing up process and more.

Try to be sensitive to this difficult transition, as your student may be wondering things like, "Will I ever have close friends like this again?" or "Will they forget about me?" The emotions involved with separating from those friends who feel like family can often color other aspects of your student's life, even if it is just temporary. And their feelings may be a bit too raw at the moment for any student to take your "Oh, you'll make good friends again" pep talk well.

Instead, be understanding, reassuring, caring and just *listen*. Sometimes that's all that is needed.

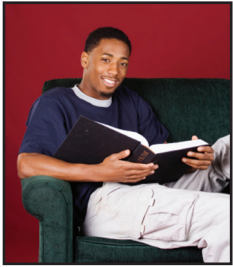
Keeping the Mind Active with Summer “Brain Work”

Summer “brain work” is valuable in helping students keep their minds limber and active so they are ready for the academic rigor of the fall. For some, this may involve summer coursework, while others may follow a more informal learning track that includes reading, intentionally learning new things through one-shot classes or making sure to have some new experiences.

Whatever the case may be, intentionally keeping their brain in shape takes some planning. Here are a few questions to help your student get in that mindset...

▶ **What is a new experience you’d like to have this summer?** (e.g. traveling to a historical site, doing some family genealogy, trying a kayaking workshop at the local environmental education center)

▶ **How can you intentionally work your brain using books, the Internet and other media?** (e.g. reading at least one “classic” from the library, regularly following a site with thought-provoking articles such as Slate.com, getting a documentary on a subject like the global water crisis from Netflix)



▶ **What are 2 things you can do this summer that are smart moves career-wise?** (e.g. asking to job shadow someone in town doing a job that looks interesting, volunteering to help with a local event as a service and a networking opportunity, determining areas of strength and areas where you need to make an effort next year to gain some experience)

▶ **What are 3 things you’d like to learn this summer?** (e.g. how to plant a vegetable garden, some basic meals to cook next year when living off-campus, how to play tennis)

Here’s to a learning-, experience-filled summertime, filled with valuable brain work, to boot!

Summer Smarts

These resources can help students feel smarter and refresh their knowledge by summer’s end...

- *Smarter by Sunday: 52 Weekends of Essential Knowledge for the Curious Mind* by The New York Times
- *Homework for Grown-ups: Everything You Learnt at School and Promptly Forgotten* by E. Foley & B. Coates
- *I Used to Know That: Stuff You Forgot from School* by Caroline Taggart
- *How to Sew a Button: And Other Nifty Things Your Grandmother Knew* by Erin Bried
- *How to Build a Fire: And Other Handy Things Your Grandfather Knew* by Erin Bried
- *The Bedside Baccalaureate: A Handy Daily Cerebral Primer to Fill in the Gaps, Refresh Your Knowledge & Impress Yourself & Other Intellectuals* Edited by David Rubel
- *An Incomplete Education: 3,684 Things You Should Have Learned but Probably Didn’t* by Judy Jones and William Wilson

Encouraging Students to Make the Most of Opportunities, Here & Now

Many students may not get their “dream job” right away. Yet, there are ways to make the most of this time, to prepare for that great opportunity which may be on the horizon, that you can encourage your student to try...

- ▶ **Volunteer** – Get experience, network and make a difference
- ▶ **Intern** – Even if it’s 5 hours a week while you hold down a full-time job, it’s a great way to get valuable experience in a field that interests you
- ▶ **Job Shadow** – Ask if you can spend the day “shadowing” someone in a job that interests you – it’s one of the best ways to learn the nitty-gritty details
- ▶ **Chamber of Commerce** – See if your local Chamber has a leadership class or networking group that you can participate in
- ▶ **Get Out in the Community** – Showcase your talents and people skills by being part of your community – you never know who might have a great opportunity, just waiting for you!

The Boomerang Generation May Come Home to Roost

They are often referred to as the “Boomerang Generation,” those who left for school or work and are now “boomeranging” back to live home during tough economic times. Approximately 3 out of 10 young adults ages 25 to 34 have done so in the past few years, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center. And 78% of those people are satisfied with their living arrangements while 77% feel upbeat about their future finances.

When it comes to family relationships, about a quarter of these students say it has been bad for their parental relationship, another quarter say it has been good and half say it really hasn’t made a difference.

And a key piece for you: according to the report, parents who had an adult child move back home in recent years due to economic conditions are just as satisfied with their family life and housing situation as those parents whose adult children have *not* moved home.

Positive Steps

With statistics like this and our current economic realities, you may be experiencing such “boomeranging” too. Linda Perlman Gordon, a psychotherapist who is also the co-author of *Mom, Can I Move Back in with You? A Survival Guide for*

Parents of Twentysomethings, offers the following tips to reinvent your parenting and redefine your relationship with a son or daughter who moves back home:

Set new ground rules. Take care of yourself by setting boundaries while also respecting your student’s privacy. Establish clear expectations through discussion on topics such as family dinners, curfews, household responsibilities and more.

Steer clear of old patterns. Rather than over-parenting by doing your daughter’s laundry or keeping tabs on your son’s every move, be a coach. Encourage your student to tackle issues and support him – this goes a lot further than doing things *for* your child and fixing every problem, which can seriously erode his self-confidence.

Focus on financial independence. Help your student emphasize saving money, spending on needs vs. wants, contributing to household expenses and working toward financial independence that will allow her to move out when circumstances are right. Have reasonable expectations based on today’s economic

Not Freeloaders

Among those 18-to-34-year-olds living at home:

- 96% report doing chores around the house
- 75% contribute to household expenses
- 35% pay their parents rent money

Source: “The Boomerang Generation” report from the Pew Research Center, www.pewsocialtrends.org, 3/15/12

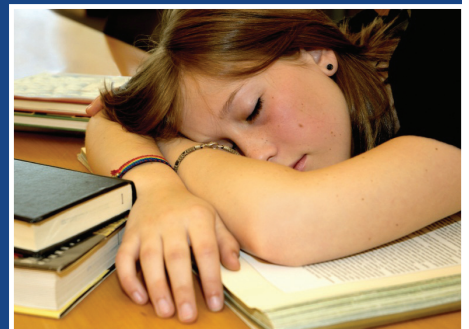
reality, while also holding your student responsible.

Enjoy the “bonus time.” Redefining your relationship with an adult child can be quite rewarding for both of you, as you enjoy the time and come to depend upon one another.

Sources: *The Washington Post*, 6/6/11 and 3/15/12; “The Boomerang Generation” report from the Pew Research Center, www.pewsocialtrends.org, 3/15/12

What Your Student Needs During Finals Week

- Your understanding about why he’s not in touch that week
- Support, whether it’s a “you can do it!” voicemail, a fun e-card or just good wishes from afar
- Concentrated chunks of time to study and prepare
- Something to look forward to
- Good sleep and nutrition
- Not having other things to worry about
- Encouragement
- Knowing that you believe in her



A Common Trend

Among all 18-to-34-year-olds, 63% say they know someone who had to move back home because of the economy.

Source: “The Boomerang Generation” report from the Pew Research Center, www.pewsocialtrends.org, 3/15/12

Negotiating the Summer Transition

Whether your student is moving home this summer after being away at school or he's planning to be around more when classes end, there's going to be an adjustment period for everyone involved. By talking about a few things upfront, you can make the transition smoother and much more pleasant!

Expectations. Students often return home after experiencing a year of independence and self-responsibility. Being told what to do and when can be a shock to their system. So, sit down and discuss everyone's expectations for behavior, curfews and more right off the bat. Don't talk *at* your student, though; instead, talk *with* her. And listen to her perspective, too, as you come to a mutual understanding about how the summer will go.



Finances. Does your student have a clear understanding regarding how much money he needs to save up this summer? Have you discussed things like spending money, work expectations and more? Again, having this proactive discussion in May is *much* better than reacting poorly in August.

Family Responsibilities. Incorporating your student back into the everyday flow of your family's life may involve some growing pains. What chores will she pick up? What obligations are in place that she

should plan for (e.g. the July family reunion, the June graduation party)? Get out your calendars for a family meeting where you can all plot out the summer and come to mutual agreements about shared tasks and time.

Transportation. If your student doesn't have his own vehicle, he may ask to borrow yours. Determine how this will work so you're not feeling taken advantage of and so he knows the limits. Plus, discuss public transportation possibilities, biking, shared rides and more – a car isn't the only viable answer!

Shared Space. Living under the same roof for the summer can be a wonderful time of connection. Yet, it'll take some work and, likely, some compromise. Students who are used to their own space at college will need to adjust to living in the family house again – and you'll need to adjust to them being there! What does this mean when it comes to laundry, meals, noise and more? Talk about it now to avoid conflict.

Visitors. College students get used to making their own decisions about who will come to visit and how long they can stay. Yet, when living with the family again, these decisions need to be made collectively, so as not to disrupt anyone. Let your student know that you welcome visits from her friends, as long as you have advanced warning. Discuss parameters while also encouraging her to keep up those important college friend connections.

Having your student home for the summer can be a wonderful thing, as long as you talk out some possible kinks before they grow into

Leaving on a High Note

Wrapping up the year right is one of the keys to your student feeling good about the past year and looking forward to the next. So, what can that mean?

- **Saying your goodbyes** – not leaving these until the very end, when there's never enough time
- **Turning in all necessary paperwork** – no need for that to hover over you into the summer
- **Leaving a place better than you found it** – this includes physical surroundings and being sure to leave them in good shape when you move out
- **Behaving well** – don't put anyone in a bad position as a result of your actions, including you!
- **Thanking faculty and staff** – those folks who made a difference... they'd love to hear it
- **Following up** – whether it's a debt or a discussion, follow up so nothing is left lingering

Talk with your student about what it means to him to “wrap things up right” and then provide all the support you can as he does just that!

big problems. So, get out the coffee and gather around the kitchen table to talk through this transition. As long as you communicate from the get-go, it can be a good summer indeed.