



a newsletter for parents & families



Success. It's In Our Nature.

October 2015

## 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...

- ▶ First year students begin to realize college life is not as perfect as they were expecting it to be
- ▶ Diversity issues become very apparent as students begin interacting with others who are different from them
- ▶ Conflicts between friends – both new and old – can occur as students settle into the rhythm of the new academic year
- ▶ Feeling behind in class work and wanting more contact with instructors
- ▶ Anticipating midterms and questioning their abilities
- ▶ People start to show their “true selves” – masks start to come off as students begin to feel more comfortable in their surroundings

## Experiencing Difference on Campus – a Life-Changing Opportunity

A *big* part of the college experience is students having an opportunity to interact with those who are different from them. These differences may come in the form of someone...

- From a rural or urban setting
- With a different ethnicity
- Who speaks a different language as their primary language
- From a different religious background



- With a different gender identity
- Who is much older or younger than they are
- With a disability, whether it's a physical one or a hidden one such as a learning disability or illness
- Who is vegan or vegetarian
- Who was home schooled
- From a different racial background

That's just a sampling of the many differences students may experience during their time at college.

At first, it may be a bit uncomfortable to interact with someone different, as we all get used to what our established “norms” are. Yet, opening ourselves to varied people, cultures, ideas and ways of thought can be exhilarating. There is no better way for a student to learn about the world and

### Other Ways to Experience Difference

Students can learn more about other people, cultures and ideas on our campus by...

- ▶ Attending a campus lecture or event
- ▶ Learning another language
- ▶ Taking courses that deal with diverse topics
- ▶ Participating in cultural fairs
- ▶ Trying different foods
- ▶ Engaging in book discussions
- ▶ Asking respectful questions
- ▶ Meeting people from around the world

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# Depression and College Students

Mental illnesses – including depression – are medical conditions that can dramatically impact a person’s thoughts, feelings, judgment and ability to function. And, although these conditions impact people of all ages, they often first appear between the ages of 18 and 24, according to The Jed Foundation.

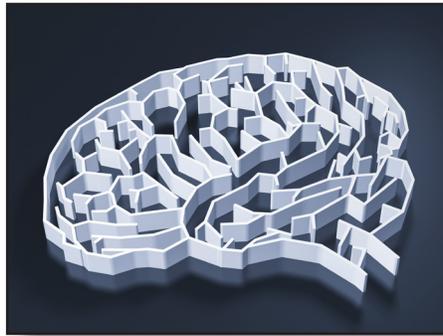
Depression involves the body, mind and thoughts, impacting one’s ability to sleep, study, work, eat and enjoy life. It is more than feeling “down in the dumps” or “blue” for a few days. It’s feeling “down” and “low” and “hopeless” for weeks at a time, with the inability to pull oneself together.

Chances are that students may see someone in the throes of depression during their time in college. Consider talking with them about the signs and symptoms of depression – and what to do if they come into contact with someone who is struggling.

## Depression

Signs and symptoms include:

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
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- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts



- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders and chronic pain

## Other Depressive Disorders

Beyond major depression, there are other forms of depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. They include...

**Persistent Depressive Disorder** – This is a long-term depressed mood that lasts at least 2 years. Someone diagnosed with it may have episodes of

## Help is Available

There are plenty of caring, trained professionals on campus available to help students contend with depression and other mental health problems. These conditions *are* treatable through therapy, medication and medical attention.

So, encourage students to reach out if they or their friends are struggling. Help is available through the counseling center, faculty and staff members. Competent, caring folks are ready with a listening ear – *no one* has to go through this alone.

major depression along with periods of less severe symptoms.

**Psychotic Depression** – This occurs when a person has severe depression plus some form of psychosis, such as disturbing false beliefs or a break with reality (delusions), or hearing or seeing upsetting things that others cannot hear or see (hallucinations).

**Postpartum Depression** – This is more serious than the “baby blues” that many women experience after giving birth. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of women experience serious postpartum depression.

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** – This is characterized by the onset of depression during the winter months, when there is less natural sunlight. It generally lifts during spring and summer.

**Bipolar Disorder** – This is also called manic-depressive illness. It involves cycling mood changes from severe highs (mania) to extreme lows (depression). These are typically gradual but can occur in a rapid, dramatic manner. Mania may include:

- Abnormal or excessive elation
- Unusual irritability
- Decreased need for sleep
- Grandiose notions
- Increased talking
- Racing thoughts
- Increased sexual desire
- Markedly increased energy
- Poor judgment
- Inappropriate social behavior

Left untreated, mania may worsen to a psychotic state.

**Sources:** National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/); The Jed Foundation, [www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)



# Tick, Tock! 12 Ways to Beat the Clock

Here are 12 time management tips you can share with students...

- 1. Write Things Down.** You have far too much going on to remember every little thing you have to do. Utilize your phone, a student planner or notebook to keep track of assignments, engagements and other goings on.
- 2. Set Realistic “To Do” Lists.** Maintain realistic goals and you won’t be disappointed when you can’t finish everything you planned to do.
- 3. Control Your Surroundings.** You can’t control the noise outside your room, but you can control where you set yourself up to study. Don’t waste time getting frustrated; instead, do whatever you *can* do to stay on task.
- 4. Get the Tough Stuff Done First.** You’ll get more done in the long run if you do the stuff that requires more of your mental energy first. Plus, you’ll spend your day less stressed.
- 5. Do One Thing at a Time.** Multitasking isn’t all it’s cracked up to be – in fact, multitasking can actually make things take longer. Sometimes you need to focus on things separately.
- 6. Break Big Tasks Up into Smaller Tasks.** Don’t let yourself get overwhelmed with big projects. Break them up into smaller tasks and tackle those pieces one at a time. As a result, you’ll feel productive and confident!
- 7. Don’t Wait Until the Last Minute.** As a college student, you never know what might crop up. Nothing is more stressful than cramming at the last minute, so plan ahead.



- 8. Motivate Yourself with Rewards.** Halfway through your homework? Head out to grab a quick cup of coffee or go for a 20-minute walk. Utilizing things you like as rewards will keep you motivated during the long hours – and will likely help you speed up your work.
- 9. Remember That All of Your Time is Equally Important.** Go, go, go. That’s what college is all

about, right? It doesn’t have to be. Hanging out and relaxing are just as important as completing an assignment. Balance is where it’s at.

- 10. Use Your Time Wisely.** Procrastinating isn’t a good idea. Get the important tasks done – without wasting time – and then you’ll have more time to do the things you enjoy!
- 11. Give Yourself Some Leeway.** Someone will always need your help just when you have something else to do. Make sure you maintain some flexibility in your schedule to accommodate these interruptions.
- 12. Don’t Forget about Sleep.** Sleep is incredibly important. If you don’t get enough, *everything* will suffer.

## Involvement = Academic and Personal Success

Research shows that students who engage in campus happenings, whether it’s joining an organization or attending campus events, often feel more a part of their school. They also learn to juggle more, leading to increased academic success.

Involvement is a way to become enriched...

- **Intellectually** – through an academic club, out-of-class research, lectures
- **Physically** – through an intramurals team, outdoors club, swimming with friends in the campus pool
- **Spiritually** – through community service work, retreats, religious services

- **Career-wise** – through job shadowing, meeting with alumni, taking on leadership positions
- **Socially** – through networking, group development activities, meeting a variety of people
- **Leadership-wise** – through being an organizational officer, planning events, managing their time

This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of benefits and opportunities! So, instead of warning students away from out-of-class involvements, consider encouraging them to balance their academics with some campus happenings. Their social life, sense of belonging – and grades – will likely thank you!



## Looking Toward Next Term

The strain of sending a student to college is tough, especially in an uncertain economy. And it's likely that your student is feeling the financial pressure, too.

That's why it's smart to start talking about finances for next term, now. Consider...

**Budget Assessment.** How much money is your student spending in a month? Encourage him to keep track during the month of October so you can get an accurate assessment of what he needs for next term.

**Winter Break Plans.** Will your student be working over winter break? If so, now is the time for her to begin putting these plans in motion to ensure she can get the job that she needs. Waiting until break begins will likely be too late.

**Upcoming Expenses.** Ask your student to talk with his peers to find



out what expenses to anticipate for the next term. From academic responsibilities to social commitments, he can get a sense for what he may need from students who've been through the cycle already.

Once students have a sense for what they'll need next term, your family can determine what is doable and what may not be. This can inform choices about job searching, spending, saving and seeking help from campus resources.

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## Experiencing Difference on Campus – a Life-Changing Opportunity

the multiple differences it holds than to get to know an individual who has had a different life experience. This type of interaction personalizes difference and adds a very human element to our understanding of one another.

So, as students talk about the different people and ideas surrounding them, encourage them to engage in kind, respectful ways. It can all be a part of making your student's world bigger and brighter!

## Beloit College Mindset List Explains Today's Traditional-Aged Students

The annual Beloit College Mindset List for the Class of 2019 spotlights interesting things about this year's traditional-aged class of new students.

For instance, according to the list, which is as old as traditional-aged college students this year, members of the Class of 2019 have never had to lick a stamp! Plus they've grown up with Wi-Fi as an entitlement, consistent access to Ben and Jerry's Phish Food ice cream and *The Lion King* always on Broadway. And, if you say "around the turn of the century," they may ask, "Which one?"

For more fascinating insights, plus the meanings behind terms like "dankrupt" and "textroverts," read through the complete list at [www.beloit.edu/mindset/2019/](http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2019/).

## The Mid-Term Check

As the middle of the term quickly approaches, here are some questions you can ask students to ensure they're on the right track...

- ▶ How do you like your classes? Which one is your favorite/least-favorite and why?
- ▶ Have you found a comfortable place to study and learn?
- ▶ What kinds of things distract you when studying? What can you do to limit these distractions?
- ▶ How are you keeping yourself motivated and inspired?
- ▶ Have you been able to get into a comfortable sleep routine?
- ▶ What study, writing and test-taking tips have you found to be helpful?
- ▶ Are you keeping a calendar of important academic dates such as when assignments are due, major fairs, career events, mid-terms and finals?

Ask these questions and more from a loving place, so your student feels cared for instead of judged.