



January 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:

- Feelings of happiness/restlessness from break
- Resolve to do better academically
- Renewed interest in classes
- New leadership skills starting to emerge
- Unwanted weight gains
- Cold weather blues
- Not many social activities scheduled
- Possible roommate changes
- Wedding plans for those who got engaged over break
- Anxiety and uncertainty for those who just arrived at a new school

## Approaching Academics in the New Year

Now that grades have been distributed and your student is preparing for a new term ahead, there may be some academic concerns to face.

### Reconsidering a Major/Minor.

Perhaps there is some questioning going on, as your student rethinks her major or minor. Talk through the pros and cons with her, while also suggesting that she discuss it with her academic advisor or another trusted faculty/staff member.

**Failing a Class.** Does your student need to retake a course? If so, encourage him to be attentive from day one and to engage the professor should he need assistance. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that!

**Shaken Confidence.** Not doing particularly well academically can shake a student's confidence. Hard work and *smart* work will help her get back on track. The learning center and campus counselors can help with a confidence crisis, too.

### Needing More Study Time.

Lower grades often mean that students need to study more – and to learn how to maximize their study time. Folks in the learning center can provide tips. Help your student reconsider *where* he studies, too. If he sits on his bed, the temptation to nap can be great. If he studies in a noisy lounge, the

distractions can be great. Brainstorm other options, from library cubicles to the laundry room, as your student takes a good look at his study mode of operation.

### Focusing Too Much on Grades.

If your student is only focusing on grades, rather than what she is learning, she's not getting the most out of her academics. So, ask her about classes from a "What are you learning?" perspective now and then. Sometimes having to verbalize it can help students really take a look at what they're getting out of a particular class.

### Not Approaching Professors.

Most faculty members have office hours and stick around after class because they want to be available to students. Encourage your student to seek clarification in person if he has questions. Face-to-face encounters are often much more valuable than emailing professors because students become *known* that way, in a positive light.

Academics don't have to be a taboo subject. Reserve judgment when possible so that you can be open to helping your student examine her current approach, both what's working and what's not. With your assistance, she can dig into a more positive academic career.



# What Does Being a Balanced Individual Mean to Your Student?

In today's fast-paced and product-valued society, it's easy to get caught up in the frenzy of doing as much as we can in as little time possible. Many folks associate quantity with success, rather than quality. But who says your student has to be one of those individuals who works, works, works?

It's a new year. Now's the time for your student to take stock of all he has on his plate and make some resolutions to add some balance to his life. This certainly is easier said than done. Especially since it is mid-year and it is tough to abandon responsibilities. But now is the time for your student to assess all he is involved with – and whether those engagements are *truly* worth the associated time and stress. It's time for him to determine what is most important to him, so he can start making small changes now that will help him reach his goals.

Encourage your student to start by asking himself the following questions:

- What am I really getting out of the activities with which I am involved?
- Am I truly focused on what is most important to me in my life?
- Am I really “present” when folks need me?



- Am I truly engaged in my life?
- In what areas am I spending most of my time? Are these areas those that are most important to me?

These are tough questions to answer. Give your student some time to really think about them. If he is happy with his answers, great! If he is not happy with his answers, encourage him to consider trying some of these strategies:

- **Talk with his advisor/coach and/or supervisor about his commitments.** They can offer him valuable advice on how to manage his time effectively, what activities will help him with his personal and professional goals, and more!
- **Think about the things that seem to stress him out most.** Ask him what he does to take care of himself when he is really stressed. Suggest he pick three ways he can commit to “de-stressing” during these times. Perhaps he likes to run, watch movies, jam on his guitar, or zone out watching his favorite reality TV show. The next time he is stressed, encourage him to take 5 minutes or a half-hour to relax with one of these pastimes and clear his head.

- **Start thinking about next year.** Now is the time when your student has to consider running for leadership positions and applying for summer jobs. Encourage him

## A Creative Way to Stay Connected

January is Book Blitz Month. Why not develop a “Top 12 List” with your student – a list of 12 books you'd both like to read (one per month) this year? Work together to compile your list – identifying books that aren't too lengthy or taxing during the academic months – and commit to reading the designated book each month. If you live close enough to your student, gather one day each month over coffee or tea to discuss the book. Or, schedule a FaceTime or Skype date to share that conversation and coffee virtually.

Reading for pleasure together can serve as a positive distraction from the stress of academic life for your student. Plus, it's a great way for you to learn more about how your student's thoughts and values are developing as she continues to grow into adulthood.

to determine what is most important to him, what he enjoys most, and then do his darnedest to stick with only those commitments that match these items. If he burns himself out before he even graduates, how will he function in his first job? Remember.... quality, not quantity, is where it's at.

It's time we start equating success with those who take good care of themselves, lead balanced lives, and spend quality time with family and friends. Get your student to become a more balanced individual today!



# Distracted Walking Cause for Concern on Campus

Doctors and safety experts are increasingly concerned about the risk associated with distraction while walking. Most people are captivated by responding to or sending text messages, talking on cell phones, or using some type of mobile device with headphones to listen to music – even while walking. Preoccupied and distracted pedestrians have become common on busy streets. This loss of situational awareness is similar to that of a distracted driver. And the result can be injury or death.

Sadly, distracted walking can have tragic consequences, as it did for an 18-year-old first year student at James Madison University (VA) this past November, reported WHSV.com. The woman died after being hit by a bus on campus. Authorities have indicated that the driver of the bus had a green light and was turning left when she hit the student. State police said that the student was wearing dark clothing and wasn't paying attention.

## What is Distracted Walking?

Generally speaking, distracted walking is when pedestrians who use streets are so oblivious to their surroundings that they fail to see oncoming vehicles or other hazards. Students of all ages—who are often seen walking while listening to music players, gaming on handheld consoles, or talking and texting on cell phones—are particularly vulnerable. The situation is so prevalent that the term, “Podestrians” (iPod + pedestrian) has sprung up to become the common nickname for these foot travelers.



## Research Confirms Cause for Concern

Researchers are trying to determine what makes distracted walking with mobile devices so different from other types of multitasking. A study conducted at Western Washington University noted that talking on a cell phone takes a toll on cognition and awareness. The study showed that pedestrians using their cell phones often did not notice objects or people in their path.

They also found a type of preoccupation called “inattention blindness,” meaning that a person can be looking at an object but fail to register it or process what it is. Adam Gazzaley, a neuroscientist at the University of California at San Francisco, explained that cell phone conversations tax auditory functions in the brain as well as visual functions. Using both functions simultaneously prompts the listener to create visual imagery related to the conversation in a way that overrides or obscures the processing of real images.

## Raising Awareness in Your Student

No one would argue that technology brings great benefits to the way we do our work and connect

with others, but it's certainly not without its downsides too. We are so plugged in, that oftentimes we do too many things at once, not realizing that one – or all of the tasks we are trying to accomplish – suffer.

Let students know these hazards of using mobile devices while walking:

- **Cell phones:** Inattention to surroundings or lack of situational awareness
- **Texting while walking:** Eyes taken away from path of travel and inattention to surroundings
- **MP3 players with headphones:** Noise-induced hearing loss and inattention to surroundings

And how they can prevent accidents from distracted walking:

- Don't walk, talk and text.
- If you have to talk or text, move to the side of the walkway out of the way of others.
- Never cross or walk in the street while using an electronic device.
- Do not walk with headphones in your ears.
- Keep track of your surroundings.

The danger of distracted walking gives new meaning to the mantra “Stop. Look. Listen.” and is one you'll want to emphasize to your student “podestrian.”

**Sources:** whsv.com, (11/17/11); compliance.gov



# Mentoring: The Art of Aligning Body, Mind & Spirit

Some folks wonder if mentoring is a lost art in today's world. We like to think not, knowing how beneficial having a strong, solid mentor can be. Good mentors do all sorts of things: they keep you on track when you begin to veer off course; they make sure you are being honest and true to yourself and to others around you; and they provide wisdom and guidance for daily, difficult decision making.

January is National Mentoring Month. Consider sharing some of these benefits on mentoring with your student this month:

**M**entoring is a great way to learn a variety of personal and professional skills.

**E**veryone can have a mentor – and mentors come from all walks of life.

**N**ot everyone is fortunate enough to have a mentor, even though anyone can have one.

**T**o get the most out of a mentoring relationship, consider placing some purpose behind it.

**O**ne-on-one, long term, face-to-face mentoring isn't the only type of mentoring relationship that exists.

**R**elationships that are strong are mutually beneficial to both parties involved; mentorships are no different.

There is no doubt that mentoring is an effective educational tool. Encourage your student to identify someone in his life who could serve in this capacity for him.

## Famous Mentor Pairings

Even the most successful people couldn't have done it without a mentor!

- Warren Beatty to Diane Keaton
- Bob Fosse to Melanie Griffith
- Madonna to Gwyneth Paltrow
- Paul Major to Picabo Street
- Michael Landon and Patty Duke Astin to Melissa Gilbert
- John Roethlisberger to Blaine Wilson
- Emmitt Smith to La Dainian Tomlinson
- Bill Cosby to Sinbad
- Max Martin to Britney Spears
- Viktor Petrenko to Oksana Baiul
- Barbara Walters to Kathie Lee Gifford
- Whitney Houston to Brandy
- Michelle Robinson to President Barack Obama
- Oprah Winfrey to "Dr. Phil" McGraw

**Source:** [mentors.ca/mentorpairs.html](http://mentors.ca/mentorpairs.html)

## Valentine's Day... It's Not Happy for All

The New Year has barely begun, yet stores are already dotted with red and pink cupids, lacy hearts and lovey paraphernalia aplenty. It can only mean one thing... Valentine's Day is nigh. This can be a tough time of year for some students, as they choose to focus on not having a partner or the difficult times they're going through with a current partner, rather than the love that *is* in their life. You can help by reminding them about the various "loves of their life," including:

- **Friends** – Encourage her to spend time with good friends as a reminder of how lucky she is.
- **Siblings** – Drawings, phone calls or funny emails from brothers and sisters can be great distractions.
- **Grandparents** – Who doesn't love a Valentine's card from Grandma or Grandpa?
- **Pets** – A photo of his favorite furry friend may be just what he needs to get him out of a "woe with me" funk!
- **You** – In your own way, let your student know how much you love him. It can really make a difference, especially during this cupid-happy time of year!

And 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.

