

RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE

September 2006

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:

- ➔ exploration and acknowledgement of personal values
- ➔ long distance relationship strain
- ➔ feelings of loneliness and homesickness may increase
- ➔ a desire to feel connected to campus
- ➔ roommate adjustments
- ➔ experimentation with alcohol and other drugs

"it takes courage to grow up and turn out to be who you really are."

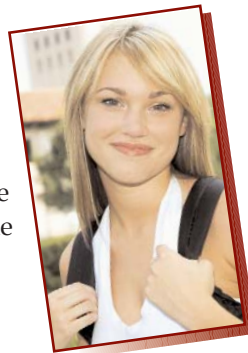
~ e.e. cummings

What your new student may be experiencing during this first part of the semester

Swaying to the "Rhythm of the Freshman Year"

The rhythm of the freshman year. Your student will be acclimating to the ebb and flow

of life on campus while your rhythm will change somewhat, too. Authors Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger highlight "the rhythm of the freshman year" in their book, *Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years* (2003). Here are some of the key points to be aware of during this first busy month:



- The first few weeks involve a frenetic academic pace as classes start, syllabi are interpreted, professors are sized up and schedules are finalized. This may involve "trying on" certain classes, talking things through with upperclassmen and advisors, and finally having to commit to a slate of courses.
- Extracurricular life also kicks in during those first few weeks as organizations try to

recruit new students, events beckon their participation, and the social scene starts humming in the residence halls and beyond. This can be welcome overstimulation for some students while others get overwhelmed.

- "Students' reactions to school tend to be intense during these early weeks," say Coburn and Treeger. "They either love it or

Going Home Too Soon

When your student is sounding homesick and lonely, a natural instinct is to invite them home. Yet, experts say that sticking it out for that first month on campus is key when it comes to students finding their place. It's important for them to get involved with weekend activities throughout September, whether it's a hayride program sponsored by their hall council or going to student activities' outdoor movie on the lawn. Involvement and engagement lead to a sense of belonging. Plus, sticking it out means they'll eat in the dining hall, hang out with other students from class or the residence halls, and tune into the "rhythm" of their new campus life.

continued on page four



Proactive steps for students

Reducing the Risk of Identity Theft

Chances are you've seen that commercial where the manly voice comes out of the young college student and the voice rattles on about all they've purchased or all they've done with money they found through using someone else's credit card. This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to identity theft in today's society. Identity thieves can virtually take over their victim's life—renting apartments, leasing cars, racking up bills and forcing their victims into years of trying to rectify their credit.

Identity theft is a growing concern that effects all age groups, all ethnicities and all socioeconomic levels—it does not discriminate. "Personal information is the new currency," said U.S. Federal Trade Commissions (FTC) Chairman Deborah Platt Majoras. "Consumers should protect their personal information as carefully as they protect their cash."

Minimizing the Risk

As this risk grows, it's important for students—and others—to know how to protect themselves. The FTC has launched a national program to educate people on steps they can take to minimize their risk of becoming an identity theft victim. According to the program, the three keys to minimizing the risk are:

Be alert to signs that require immediate attention:

- ▲ Bills that do not arrive as expected
- ▲ Unexpected credit cards or account statements
- ▲ Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- ▲ Calls or letters about purchases you did not make

Source: "Deter-Detect-Defend: AvoID Theft" brochure, www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/idtheft/idth01.pdf

1. **Deter**—Take steps to reduce your risk of ID theft by safeguarding your information.
2. **Detect**—Monitor your personal financial accounts and billing statements.
3. **Defend** —Act quickly when you suspect identity theft.

More specifically, here are some tips to share with your student:

- Only carry the ID, credit and debit cards you need when going out. Don't carry your Social Security card.
- Treat mail and trash carefully. Shred sensitive documents, such as charge receipts, insurance forms, bank statements, etc.. which you no longer need.
- Order a free credit report through www.annualcreditreport.com or 1-877-322-8228.
- Review financial accounts and billing statements regularly.
- Place passwords on your phone, bank and credit card accounts. But don't use easy-to-access info like your birth date, phone number, your mother's maiden name or a simple series of numbers.
- Secure personal information, especially if you share a room or have people going in and out.
- Don't offer personal info on the phone, via mail or on the Internet

unless you've initiated the contact or know who you're dealing with. It's easy for thieves to pose as a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

- Never click on links sent in unsolicited emails; instead, type in a

Suspect That Your Identity Has Been Stolen?

Head to the Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft Site available at www.consumer.gov/idtheft/ for step-by-step instructions on where to go and what to do. Plus, talk with your campus public safety department. Don't delay!

web address you know. Use firewalls, anti-spyware and anti-virus software to protect your computer and keep them up-to-date. Visit OnGuardOnline.gov for more information.

- Put outgoing mail in a post office box or take it to the post office instead of tossing it in an unsecured mailbox. And remove your incoming mail in a timely manner.
- Don't give out your Social Security number unless absolutely necessary. Don't write it on personal checks. And if your school, state or health insurance company uses it as an identifier, ask if you can use another number instead.
- Be cautious when responding to promotions as thieves can create phony ones to get your info.
- Keep your purse/wallet in a safe place.
- When ordering new checks, pick them up from the bank instead of having them mailed to you.

Identity theft is a very real threat, even within the seemingly "safe" confines of a college or university campus. Help your student become more aware as he takes responsibility for his finances—and his reputation.

Sources: Federal Trade Commission: *Your National Resource About Identity Theft*, www.consumer.gov/idtheft/; "Deter-Detect-Defend: AvoID Theft" brochure, www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/idtheft/idth01.pdf

Third annual effort happening this September

National Preparedness Month

Being prepared is more than the Boy Scout motto—it's a good idea when it comes to emergencies. The U.S. Department

of Homeland Security is once again sponsoring National Preparedness Month this September to increase public awareness and to help people

be better prepared for a variety of "what if?" scenarios.

Here are a few preparation tips from the National Preparedness Month Coalition

that you can share with your student and other family/friends:

- **Get a Kit**—Gather supplies such as water, food, a battery-powered radio, a flashlight and a first aid kit that will allow you to survive for at least three days in an emergency.
- **Make a Plan**—Plan now for what you will do in an emergency. How will you communicate? Will you shelter in or evacuate?
- **Be Informed**—What specific threats could impact your community, from natural disasters to potential terrorist threats? And how should you respond? Learn about the emergency plans already established for your area at www.ready.gov so you have a place to start.
- **Get Involved**—Consider being trained in first aid and emergency response, and getting involved in preparing your community for emergencies. You can learn more through the Citizen Corps at www.citizen-corps.gov.

At www.ready.gov, you can find a list of supplies for emergency kits, info and templates to create an emergency plan, and more.

Source: www.ready.gov/america/npm/

Campus Specific

Most campuses have a crisis response plan in place.

Encourage your student to talk with residence life staff and others about what they should do in case of emergency.

Making the Most of Parent/Family Weekend

A campus visit may be right around the corner if you're planning to attend Parent/Family Weekend this fall. Yet, it's not just about crab puffs at receptions and shaking hands. This is a real opportunity to connect with your student! Make the most of your family weekend by:

- **Attending Classes.** Some schools offer the chance to sit in on portions of popular classes. See what your student is experiencing in the classroom so you can "talk academics" throughout the remainder of the year.
- **Listening to Your Student.** Listen as he tells you about the rugby intramurals team he joined or the bio lab he's really enjoying. Listen as she tells you about a group she'd like to join or how much she has connected with her RA. This is your time together to communicate face-to-face. Try to talk less and *listen* more—you just may pick up on some subtleties that don't come through via IM and phone calls.
- **Trying New Things.** There will likely be quite a slate of activities available during the weekend. Try some of these new things with your student, from service projects to a cappella concerts. He/she may find a new hobby, interest or direction as a result!
- **Mingling & Meeting.** Attend receptions, talk with other parents, meet administrators and faculty... these folks are at your disposal during the weekend. Plus, you'll get a better feel for what campus life is about and who is available to your student.
- **Staying on Campus.** It might be tempting to head off campus away from the hub-bub yet participating on campus is how you and your students will likely feel most connected.
- **Ooh-ing and Aah-ing Instead of Huffing and Puffing.** Try to be upbeat and positive throughout the weekend. Comment on how good the dining hall food is instead of making "I can't BELIEVE you have to eat such slop" remarks. Compliment what your student has done to make her room look homey, how pretty the campus grounds look and more. Your student will be seeing campus through *your* eyes this weekend.
- **Connecting with the Campus Parent Organization.** If your school has a parent group, go to a meeting and look into getting involved. It's a great way to meet other parents and to participate in the life of the campus!

And have a wonderful time!



Will anything surprise you?

Understanding Traditional-Aged New Students with the Beloit College Mindset List

Trying to understand this generation of traditional-aged college students? The folks at Beloit College (WI) have been publishing an eye-opening Mindset List for several years that lists 75 characteristics of each incoming class. Topics run the gamut from politics to technology to world affairs to entertainment—and beyond!



The Mindset List is the brainchild of Beloit's Keefer Professor of the Humanities Tom McBride and Director of Public Affairs Ron Nief. Together, they offer valuable insights for parents, administrators and others

who are continually trying to better understand today's students.

Take a peek at this year's list by heading to www.beloit.edu/~pub-aff/mindset/. You'll also find archived lists from past years to better understand those older students/past students in your life.

Freshman Year

continued from page one

hate it or alternate between the two extremes, sometimes in the same day, sometimes even during the same phone call home."

- After three or four weeks on campus, students start settling in, realizing that this is a new "home" and that they've made a long-term commitment.
- Now that reality is settling in after those first exciting weeks, some students may become homesick. They'll reach out to old friends, possibly visiting them, as they wonder if they'll ever make such good friends on campus. This desire to connect is a grab at continuity during a time of big transitions.
- Sometimes settling into a day-to-day rhythm on campus can be comforting to students who were initially overwhelmed and homesick. It's the start of them finding a place to belong.
- As classes cook along, some students may become bored by their classes. Others will have difficulty managing their time since they don't have the same routine they did last year. And

some will study inefficiently, overwhelmed by what seems an insurmountable amount of work, leaving no time for play.

- Socially, the honeymoon will soon be over as roommates have their first squabbles and those "instant friends" from the beginning lose their novelty. First impressions pass and polite tolerance between strangers may give way to disagreements. Students will also start finding their place within the community by choosing groups to spend time with—while still trying to figure out where exactly they fit.

That's the first half of the semester or so, in a nutshell, according to Coburn and Treeger. As you and your student adjust to the "rhythm of the freshman year," recognize that not every student goes through every scenario listed above. Keep the lines of communication open and try to listen without being too much of a cheerleader. Students need encouragement, sure, yet they may also just need a listening ear as they learn to figure things out for themselves.

September 11th: Five Years Later

In the midst of this exciting month comes the five-year anniversary of 9/11. Many campuses will be commemorating this occasion, which is the most major world event for today's traditional-aged students.

Don't hesitate to discuss 9/11 with your student. He may want to process through how he's feeling about the state of the world now, especially in light of August's foiled plot to compromise flights from the United Kingdom to the U.S. She may want to think back to that day in 2001 and how it impacted her—or to talk about what's happening on campus surrounding 9/11 memorials.

Discussing 9/11 in the context of thoughts and emotions is yet another way to connect with your student on his path to adulthood.