

Lesson 2 of 5: “Building A Balanced College Social Life”

ABSTRACT

Many students enter college without adequate preparation. Even with the most supportive parents, counselors and student life leaders, many wonder if they will fit into the college social scene. Others over-commit and find themselves struggling academically because they are pulled in too many directions. You can help your students face their anxieties, find balance and gear up for what can be an exciting college social life. Here are few tips to help you do this.

Get Involved...

New friends are arm’s length away

The simplest way for students to start getting involved is to connect with those around them. Instead of waiting for peers to start a conversation, they can initiate by introducing themselves to others in their class, dorm, library, etc. For the introvert, this can be daunting especially in a new environment. One way to face this fear is to remember that the student sitting next to them probably feels the same; waiting for someone to kick-start a conversation.

Being homesick is very common among college students, but you can teach them ways to cope with this. Suggest they explore the campus. This way, they will become familiar with the place and identify spots that interest them most. Filling their dorm room with familiar items from home will also make them feel comfortable. They can hang pictures of their family members and friends to make their dorm cozy and relaxing. Homesickness is a phase that passes once they become more comfortable with the new environment and step out to meet new friends.

Join intramural leagues at college

Intramural sports offers students several advantages including:

- a) meeting new people while doing what they enjoy,
- b) playing the sport they love,
- c) diverting themselves from stress related to school or work,
- d) building teamwork and sportsmanship, and
- e) working out physically to improve overall health and fitness.

Join campus clubs and organizations

Undoubtedly, joining clubs and campus organizations are the best ways to meet people who have similar interests on campus. Finding groups with similar values is a challenge for freshmen because there are a myriad of them on college campuses. It’s important to visit groups of interest evaluating each based on criteria of importance. Usually after 3 visits they will be able to determine if the group fits their values.

...But Don’t Over Commit

OK, we’ve discussed the best ways to get involved on campus, but an active social calendar should not outweigh consistent study patterns. The main reason for attending college is to get an education. Students

must prioritize and manage their activities accordingly drawing the line when socializing hinders academic progress. This is where the mature and focused emerge and continue on to graduation.

As counselors, suggest they choose two groups where they can commit and be active. The commitment level will vary from student to student based on their class-load, work-load and other personal commitments. They need to know where priority lies and allocate time based on priority. The activity below will give students insight to how realistic their social schedule can be.

Summary

College is an exciting season of social exploration. It is important that students experience as much of the social scene as they can to learn more about themselves, create unique experiences and possibly build lifelong friendships. Each student's social rhythm must factor priorities with academic excellence being at the top or near the top of the list.