

Niagara University

The Campus Link

Niagara's Newsletter for Parents and Friends

June 2011



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Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are things your student may be experiencing this month:

- ◆ Missing friends at school and feeling like it'll be a long time until they see them again
- ◆ Transitioning back to life at home after being away all year (for students who go away to school)
- ◆ Adjusting to a new routine
- ◆ Working full-time instead of going to school full-time
- ◆ Anxiety about academics — feeling like they have a lot of ground to make up if they did poorly last semester
- ◆ Handling summer classes
- ◆ Reestablishing relationships with siblings, parents and friends
- ◆ Budgeting their money and saving for fall

Getting to Know Campus

If you and your student are new to the NU campus, there are some easy things you can do from afar to help you feel connected. For instance...

Print Out a Campus Map. Having an NU campus map posted on your fridge keeps it present. Take a look regularly to see where buildings are in relation to one another, to check out the residence halls and to get a feel for what is east/west/south and north. That way, when you step foot on campus, you'll feel like you have your bearing.
<http://www.niagara.edu/campus-info/>

Click Around. Niagara's website offers a wealth of information! One night, explore the various student services and what their pages provide. Then, click around the academic sector for class listings, faculty profiles and advising resources. Spend time learning more about athletics, campus safety, residence life, student organizations, wellness programs, special services and so much more. The words and photos can help transport you into the heart of campus.

Keep Printed Materials Present. Stash any brochures, view books and other materials in a folder or a binder. Then, keep that resource on the living room coffee table, in the dining room or on a handy shelf where it'll be browsed regularly.

Tap Into Alumni Info. An interesting way to tune into campus is to see what alumni have to say and what they're doing with their "after campus lives." So check out the website for a taste of what former students are all about.

Of course, stepping foot on campus and talking face-to-face with folks while experiencing the life of our school is one of the best ways to connect. We look forward to seeing you!

The Art of Active Listening

According to the Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado, active listening is “a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding.”

So, how do you go about listening effectively when you and your student are communicating?

1. Encouraging helps convey interest and keeps someone talking. Use neutral words and vary voice intonations. Example: “Can you tell me more...?”
2. Clarifying helps understand what was said, gathers more information and enables the speaker to see other points of view. Ask questions and restate wrong interpretations to force the speaker to explain further. Example: “When did this happen?”
3. Restating shows that you are listening and understanding what is being said, and not misinterpreting. Restate basic ideas and facts. Example: “So you would like your roommate to trust you more, is that right?”
4. Reflecting shows understanding for how the person is feeling and helps the speaker evaluate her own feelings after hearing them expressed by someone else. Example: “You seem very upset that your friends didn’t include you.”
5. Summarizing is used to review progress, pull together important ideas and facts, and establish a basis for further discussion. Restate the major ideas expressed, including feelings. Example: “The main things you’ve expressed so far are...”
6. Validating acknowledges the worthiness of the other person. Acknowledge the value of issues and feelings, and show appreciation for the speaker’s efforts and actions. Example: “I appreciate your willingness to discuss this with me.”

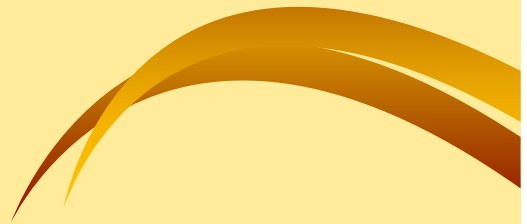
Communicating with your student takes so many forms, with listening well rising to the top. Practicing during the summer can help ensure that you and your student listen to and hear each other to the best of your abilities. And once distance, busy schedules and school are added into the mix, you’ll be glad to have that active listening skill under your belt!

Sources: Taft College Tutor Training, www.taft.cc.ca.us/lrc; Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado, www.colorado.edu/conflict

What is Active Listening?

As another tool in your parent/student communication toolbox, it’s about...

- ◆ Giving Your Full Attention. Keeping your eyes and focus on the person speaking to you.
- ◆ Being in the Moment. Not starting to develop your response while the speaker is still finishing her thoughts.
- ◆ Limiting Advice. Sometimes people just need to process through things to figure it out on their own, while you listen affirmingly.
- ◆ Not Interrupting. Interruptions often make it about you rather than the person you’re supposed to be listening to!



Making the Most of CARE Sessions

CARE at Niagara is an important time for new students to gather information and get more comfortable with campus, for both you and your student. Some simple tips can help you make the most of this experience:

- Ask questions
- Listen well
- Meet faculty & staff members
- Participate in activities
- Take notes
- Get to know other parents/ family members
- Attend a variety of sessions
- Give your student space
- Handle concerns with care and dignity
- Take tours and get into buildings
- Stay hydrated and healthy in the heat
- Have paperwork in place
- Soak it all in!

Looking at Your Student's Employee Package

And helping him/her consider areas to pursue

When it comes to heading down the career path, choosing a major is just one piece of the puzzle for students. Looking at their overall employee “package” is about a whole lot more than just what they majored in. It involves service, activities, leadership, work experiences and more.

This summer is a good time for all students to gather the pieces of their employee package. That way, they'll be ready when it comes to resume writing, job interviewing or simply looking at their experiences so far and determining other areas they'd like to pursue in the coming year. You can help with this process by posing the following types of questions...

Your Coursework

What classes have touched you in some way—whether it's getting you to think differently, striking an emotion or lighting up your enthusiasm? What makes each class particularly noteworthy?

Your Activities

What extracurricular pursuits are you involved with? Are you spending your time and energy in areas that have meaning to you? Why or why not?

Your Service

How do you serve others? What are your community involvements, from one-shot deals to ongoing efforts? Are your efforts supporting causes that are important to you? Why or why not?

Your Leadership Skills

What leadership skills are you acquiring through your involvements, classes, work and beyond? What do you consider your leadership strengths at this point? And what areas would you like to improve?

Your Work Experience

What jobs have you held throughout your work life so far? What are two to three things you have learned from each experience?

By examining these types of questions and writing down answers, your student will have a good start when it comes time to put together a resume, scholarship essays, answers to job interview questions, or assessing the types of experiences to pursue in the coming academic year.

Being intentional with time and effort can help your student greatly enhance her/his employee package and life.



Five Areas of Growth

Consider asking your student: What are some things you'd like to learn, areas you'd like to improve on or experiences to pursue? Once he/she has reviewed his answers to the questions in this article, encourage him/her to make a list of 5 growth areas to focus on. This will help make efforts more intentional, while also leading him/her toward a major, a career and a life he/she is proud to live!

Keeping the Brain Busy

Many students want to turn their brains off for the summer after a long school year. Yet, the brain is a muscle that needs to stay limber in order to function most effectively. So, here are some ways students can keep their brains ready for the upcoming academic year while also having fun:

Read. Encourage your student to pick one or two books to read during the summer. Getting in the reading habit now will make consuming all those assignments during the school year much easier.

Write. Jotting thoughts in a journal, writing a letter, submitting an opinion piece to the local paper... all keep the writing muscles loose and ready!

Learn New Things. Maybe that means turning on National Public Radio in the morning, listening to podcasts like “Stuff You Missed in History Class” (from HowStuffWorks.com), picking up a news magazine, listening to books on tape during car commutes or taking free one-shot classes at the local library. There are so many ways to learn!

Memory Recall. Work with your student on memory exercises, like remembering people's names after a large gathering or describing what is on the table when you're not looking at it. These mini-workouts get you in the memory recall habit, which can come in very handy during the academic year when studying and then applying information to exams.

Share. Sometimes the way to recognize that we're learning is to verbalize it out loud. So, consider putting in place some ways you and your student can share what it is that your brains are up to this summer! It might just be sharing a new tidbit of information at the dinner table or getting in the weekly habit of sharing “five things I learned this week” with one another.

Encourage your student to stretch his/her brain this summer!





Getting into Healthy Habits for the Year Ahead

Summer is a good time to get into training for the year ahead. By practicing healthy habits now, your student will be ready to hit campus in the fall with increased energy and gusto!

Some simple ways to do that include:

Establishing Smart Sleep Patterns. This involves trying to go to bed and get up at about the same time each day, while also striving for 6-8 quality hours of sleep. Plus, it's smart to create a before-bed ritual, such as reading, turning off the computer/TV an hour before bed or taking a shower.

Striving for Five. Consciously trying to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables per day during the summer will make it more of a habit once the school year kicks in. Consider posting a simple chart on your fridge with information from the website www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov to make this easier.

Moving Around. Identifying an activity or two, from walking to Wii Fit, can help make the moving around habit more of a reality. Maybe you and your student can share an activity or at least do your separate things at the same time, as a way to support one another.

Learning to Relax. This is a big one, as campus life can get very stressful. Some people turn to yoga and meditation as a means of relaxation, while others simply learn to breathe more intentionally. Knowing your stress triggers is a good place to start, so you can figure what helps you calm down and get on with your day.

Instead of telling your student what to do when it comes to developing healthy habits, work with him/her so you can both identify two to three healthy goals you'd like to meet this summer. By doing this yourself, you're not only supporting your student, you're also doing yourself a favor and serving as a positive role model!

CARE

New first-year Niagara students should plan to attend one of the CARE sessions listed below:

CARE I: July 11 - 12

CARE II: July 14 - 15

CARE III: July 18 - 19

Care sessions fill up quickly so plan on registering as soon as possible.

<http://www.niagara.edu/care/>

Flexibility: An Important Tool

How can flexibility help in your relationship with your student?

It Helps You See Choices. Rather than imposing your choices, being flexible and taking note of what your student chooses can help you learn more about her/him. This might involve something as small as choosing a comforter or something bigger, such as registering for an interesting class.

It Communicates Trust. Being flexible enough to let your student makes these choices communicates a certain level of trust that can be invaluable.

It Lets Students Learn from Mistakes & Successes. Although it can be hard to watch your student stumble, it's important that he/she have the opportunity to learn from missteps. Being flexible allows this type of learning to happen.

It Can Help You See Things Through a Different Filter. When we display flexibility—of thought and action—it can really open us to some different experiences, too. For instance, if your student is arguing a certain point, being flexible enough to look at it from her/his perspective can be very enlightening.

Flexibility is an important tool as you continue developing an adult relationship with your student.