



Parent and Family Newsletter

MAY 2022

Dear parents and families,

As we approach Commencement Day on May 13, we take time to celebrate the accomplishments of several hundred students. These past few years have been unlike any in Minot State's 109-year history, and I believe the experiences that have demanded resilience and persistence will serve our students well as they make their mark in the world.

As we close the chapter on this semester, I feel a special excitement for 2022-23. We will continue expanded programming for parents and families, and all of us are looking forward to seeing you in person at events this fall. There is no denying that MSU is not the same vibrant place without your student and you participating in our campus life.

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions by emailing at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon,
Vice President for Student Affairs



IMPORTANT DATES

MAY

- 9 – 12** – Final exams
- 13** – Commencement, 10 A.M., MSU Dome
- 23** – Official grades available

View more dates and events:
MinotStateU.edu/calendar



**Parent and Family
Weekend
Oct. 14 – 16, 2022**

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

10 ways to reduce end-of-semester stress — reminders for your student

By Lori Bender, CollegiateParent.com

These past two years, students have had to cope with so many added stressors related to the pandemic. Their on-campus experiences were limited, many dealt with illness or quarantine — or they lived at home taking classes online, separated from their friends and normal college routine.

In any year, but particularly these past years, parents want to help their students finish the spring term not only with academic success but, more importantly, with balanced and nurtured emotional, mental, and physical health.

One of the most effective ways to help your college student minimize stress is, first, to **communicate your interest in helping**. “I am happy to listen. I know this seems unmanageable. You will get through this.”

Second, **extend a lifeline of support and encouragement**. “Even though things are weird and uncertain because of the pandemic, you’re right where you need to be at this stage in your college plan. You’re doing great and trying your hardest under challenging circumstances.”

Finally, **check in, follow up, and stay connected**. Even if your student is living with you at home, most likely they’re doing their work pretty independently and may or may not be sharing a lot of information. Ask



if they’re struggling, and find out what’s giving them trouble. Listen. Slip in reminders about the importance of keeping a healthy brain and body.

Use these buzzwords:

- Balance
- Choices
- Habits
- Boundaries
- Intentionality

It’s crucial to remember that *how* you deliver your reminders and support is more important than *what* you choose to say. The minute you say, “Maybe you should exercise more often,” you’ve lost their ears.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America states that 30% of college students report stress negatively affecting their academic performance, and 85% report feeling overwhelmed by everything they have to do at some point within the past year.

These statistics alone indicate students could benefit from parental guidance as they navigate the demands, pressures, and deadlines that contribute to college stress.

COVID-19 has upended campus life but the essential steps to organization and stress reduction remain the same. Here are 10 gentle reminders for your student so they can finish the semester with minimal stress:

1. Lean into your best study habits

Start preparing now for the semester end. Organize content. Schedule deadlines and project dates in a planner. Take advantage of virtual office hours with professors and TA’s and attend online study sessions.

Organize your study space (see #2). Make a study outline. Review older content and online quizzes. Create an online study group. Try using [The Eisenhower Matrix](#). Also known as the Urgent-Important Matrix, it’s a highly effective, easy-to-use

planning and decision-making tool for managing time and priorities.

2. Organize your personal learning space

An organized physical space creates an organized mind. Decide the best place(s) for you to study (i.e., somewhere comfortable and quiet). If you're studying in your bedroom, take extra trouble to keep the whole room as tidy as possible.

Be aware of the most energetic and alert times of the day and night — when you find you're best able to focus and retain information. Avoid multitasking (ear buds) when studying.

Always keep water within arm's reach for hydration.

3. Say no to cramming

Cramming results from irresponsible planning and causes undue stress on the brain. Waiting until the last minute to attempt to absorb and retain large amounts of content and then pulling all-nighters contributes to poor information storing and test error.

That's why tip #1 is #1. Remote learning may make procrastinating with assignments more tempting, but commit yourself to advance planning and prep. Allow the most study time for the most difficult and boring classes.

Please be careful about how you use stimulants to stay awake and help you concentrate, whether it's coffee, tea, or energy drinks with tons of caffeine. Adderall is a prescription drug commonly misused and abused by college students; [click here](#) to learn more.

4. Schedule (and enjoy) study breaks

The brain is designed to respond to change and variety. Reading the same subject matter for long periods of time causes the brain to slow retention, especially if it does not sense the information as relevant or worth remembering.

You'll learn better if you take study breaks. As Rick Nauert PhD observes in PsychCentral, "Brief diversions from a task can dramatically improve one's ability to focus on that task for prolonged periods."

Having to stay home reduces options, but you still have them. Take 15-minute breaks every hour and a half — get out of doors if you're able. Study for another class for a short amount of time before reactivating your focus on the original content. This will help with productivity, memory, attention, and stress reduction.

5. Tend to sleep hygiene

We're still washing our hands a lot and wearing masks when we go out. Don't forget that sleep hygiene is important, too.

Your student may not realize that a regular sleep routine supports proper management of mood, cravings, energy levels, memory retention, decision-making, and overall wellness.

College students should get at least eight hours of uninterrupted sleep a night. This is one thing that might actually be easier for students who are living at home and have fewer (no?) social distractions plus are trying to accommodate themselves to other people in the household.

A smart sleep environment is necessary. White noise, device elimination, and comfort all help improve sleep. Power naps are effective in restoring and rejuvenating brain energy. Hitting the snooze button is not effective, nor is rushing.

6. Feed your brain right

What we ingest has a direct effect on brain as well as body function. Food is the brain's fuel (think about what you put in the tank of your vehicle).

College students should eat for sustenance and long-lasting energy. Monitor refined sugar, food packaged in cellophane, and fast foods. Limit caffeine, alcohol, and stimulants. Eliminate energy drinks! Choose "clean and green" foods. Incorporate Omega 3 fatty acids (from cold water fish), fiber, and good sources of clean protein (hummus versus sour cream dips). The best foods to help fight stress are those containing vitamin C, magnesium, selenium, and vitamin B (e.g., nuts).

7. Nourish your body with movement and relaxation

The benefits of exercise for stress management are well established. But for students, scheduling

exercise can be difficult — especially now, when many rec centers and gyms are still closed.

Still, it's essential to fit in some type of vigorous activity each day. Don't add stress by obsessing about the type of exercise or time spent. Choose something fun or new. Be intentional and consistent. A "walk before you run" mentality is the most effective for maintaining a routine.

Journal your activity choices and the feelings that result. You'll notice improvement in sleep, mood, emotional regulation, and overall wellness.

8. Preserve boundaries

During ordinary times, one of the hardest things to do in college is say "no" to fun invitations and distractions. Your student may not be able to go to parties and hang out in person with their friends as much as they might like, but there are plenty of other distractions, whether it's video games and movie/TV streaming or if they live at home, being pulled into helping with household chores (which they should share, within reason).

College is still your student's top priority. They need to protect their time, energy, and health. Parents can support this goal. If your student works part-time, encourage them to limit hours at their job to 10–15 per week.

9. Break up (sometimes) with their devices

There's little need to present statistics on young adults and their smartphones. Study after study

has shown that usage in this age group is high and distraction even higher.

A powerful and eye-opening exercise is to have your student record how much time they spend on their devices (not counting academics) in a 24-hour period. Simply being more conscious of this should help free up time to study, check in with friends, and relax/exercise.

And as ever, be sure to shut off devices at least an hour before sleep.

10. Cultivate mindfulness

Being mindful is a forgotten skill in our culture. We're busy all the time and don't think it's okay to "do nothing" and "simply be."

It's healing to be aware of the sights, smells, sensations, tastes, and sounds of the present moment. Now and then, choose a spot in the neighborhood (or one you can bike or drive to), take nothing (i.e., your phone) with you, and just "be."

Notice your breathing, and watch thoughts pass through your mind without connecting or judging them. Walk with eyes and ears open. Magic.

Of course, many of these reminders are things we all need right now!

The last, most basic message we want to share with our college students is: Believe — REALLY believe — that you are doing your best.

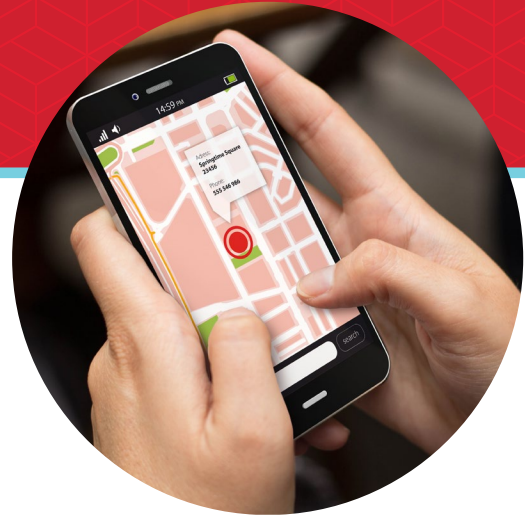
FAFSA reminder

If you haven't already submitted the 2022-23 FAFSA to apply for federal financial aid for the 2022-23 school year, it's not too late. Submit the FAFSA as soon as you can to avoid delays in the fall and encourage your student to watch their email for messages from the financial aid office throughout the summer. We are open and ready to assist you with any questions year round.



Should we track our college kids?

By David Tuttle, CollegiateParent.com



In my former dean of students role, I was aghast when I learned once from parents of a student that they were tracking him from an app on their cellphone.

Though he knew of it, this struck me as a huge breach of privacy and trust. Knowing their son was out until all hours of the night seemed invasive and, frankly, none of their business. If the student was to succeed or fail, it wouldn't be because he was being monitored. In fact, it might even backfire, and lead to him sabotaging his own success.

My youngest child went off to college this year. She was my first to go out-of-state and, also, to a large urban area, where she would be taking trains at night and be on her own in potentially dangerous situations. This was how I justified to her that I needed a tracking app on her phone.

It was only to be used in emergencies — if she couldn't be located or she sent out an SOS signal to friends and family. We side-stepped the notion that yeah, she might go missing someday. Yikes. Being a parent is scary.

So, have I stayed true to my promise to use the app only in emergencies? No. Not even close. I don't jump on it all the time but, unbeknownst to her, I have peeked time and again despite our agreement.

Not only am I as BAD as the parents I previously judged — I'm worse. I am hypocritical and deceitful. When I report to my wife things like, "Our daughter is at the lakefront," and she asks how I know, she simply pauses, shakes her head, and says something about my character (or lack thereof). And my daughter hasn't picked up on random texts like "be safe around water..."

Sure, I am horrible. But when I see that dot hovering over her residence hall at the end of the night, I seem to sleep a little better.

When tracking apps like Life360 and Family Locator gained notoriety about five years ago, the debate began, and continues to surface from time to time as parents grapple with the peace-of-mind versus autonomy/privacy sides. I thought I would revisit this, as I have now seen it from both the perspective of college administrator (and advocate for student independence) and as a parent with anxiety.

Some more nuanced things to ask yourself:

1. What is the level of intrusion?

There aren't that many possibilities as to where students might be: Class, an on- or off-campus residence, a store, a restaurant, a club. Or they could be on Elm Street or over in Amityville... Their whereabouts are usually not all that interesting (believe me).

When it comes to agreeing to a tracking app, I think a legitimate fear students have is that their parents will catch them doing something they disapprove of: That is, out partying, hooking up, or shopping. For me, I simply assume my daughter may be doing these things, and I actually don't care. I was young once. I shopped A LOT.

This is one way I justify my actions. The other is that where she is does not necessarily reflect what she is doing. I don't have a hidden camera on her (now there's an idea!), but knowing she is at a house off campus tells me very little. I can infer from the day and time whether she's in a study group, sharing a meal, or maybe at a party. But I don't really know.

2. Aren't I actually doing my kid a favor?

Oh boy, I keep digging this hole deeper. But I do sometimes feel like this is all relative. If my daughter lived at home, we would know her whereabouts most times. We are all often in regular contact with our kids, mostly by text. In our ideal worlds, we might actually talk or FaceTime on a daily basis.

One thing I have learned is to not bother her when she isn't at home. I respect her privacy and freedom. Yes, I said that with a straight face. But in truth, I do see that I can actually be less intrusive while being, well, more intrusive.

3. Isn't timing everything?

I can't imagine that I'll be tracking my younger daughter much beyond her first year away at college. It is reassuring, but tiring, and has actually lost its novelty.

And you can ask my 25-year-old-daughter (though you have to wait, as I can see she is at the grocery store as I type this) who will tell you that I'll let go at some point. (It's funny how I don't really care where my sons are. We can save that topic for another time.)

For some of us, maybe these trackers are a way to slowly let go and become comfortable with transitions.

4. What's the big picture?

In my defense, I encouraged my daughter to leave Texas. She is our only one to go out-of-state. She is doing amazing things and having transformational experiences. We are so proud of her and her independence.

I suppose we could have refused to let her go halfway across the country. But we really do value her ability to navigate the world on her own. She has always been fairly good at that, and has earned our trust. But she is my baby.

5. Isn't this my business?

As I've read articles on this topic, I have noted a certain level of righteousness on both sides. Some can't imagine the intrusion that this type of technology offers. They decry the erosion of trust impacting the long-term parent-child relationship. Well, their kids probably call them once in a while.

Alternately, there are those who are comfortable bulldozing, hovering, and micro-managing their kids. They've poured everything into those munchkins and aren't going to stop now.

As with most things, there might be a good place to land in between the extremes. There is probably a place where you can live with what works best for you and your student. This is about them, after all. But it's about you, too.

In the end, it really does come down to your peace of mind versus the independence your child deserves. But they should have a say and be fully aware of whether or not you are using tracking apps. I learned that simply over the course of writing this piece. When my daughter finished her exam today, I called her to come clean. We acknowledged that one of her parents is neurotic and doesn't respect boundaries... and the other is her mother.

She actually was okay with my breach of protocol and was okay with me checking once in a while. We decided that if that changes, mom would take over the tracking app for emergencies only.

Dad may yet lose his privileges, but we will see. Time will tell if he can be trusted. Go figure.

