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Helpful Links:

For info about SAT I, II, and AP Tests go to:

www.collegeboard.com

For info about ACT test go to:

www.act.org

For info about test optional schools go to:

www.fairtest.org/university/optional

For info about financial aid go to:

www.FAFSA.ed.gov

www.fastweb.com

www.finaid.org

For college search info go to:

www.collegenavigator.gov

www.collegeprowler.com

To take a virtual tour of college campuses go to:

www.youniversitytv.com

To learn about Colleges That Change Lives go to:

www.ctcl.org

Valentine's Day: Self Love

Quick! List off the first things that come to mind when you hear "Valentine's Day"? Is it boxes of chocolate? Fancy pink, red, and white frosted baked goods? Pink and red roses? It's February, which means the day of expressing our love and affection for others is right around the corner. The emphasis of demonstrating appreciation, devotion, and love for others is wonderfully generous and validating for the recipients, however, we are here to tell you it is ok, it's even critically important to show yourself a little appreciation and love too. Not only will you benefit from this compassion, but that little boost of energy and wellbeing that will result from this private expression of self-love will benefit the people in your life as well!

There is a popular quote related to family wellness: "If Momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Nothing could be further from the truth. If a parent is overtired, feeling underappreciated, or stressed, that emotional distress spreads to the rest of the family. This phenomenon is applicable to one's approach to life: if you are not happy, this makes it difficult for you to be at your best for others. So, how can you show yourself kindness and appreciation, not just on Valentine's Day, but every day?

Be Kind: praise yourself, even for the small accomplishments you make. Don't mistake this for permission to hang your hat on a small accomplishment and use it to justify stagnation. On the contrary, use it to fuel your engines, and continue on your journey to success and reaching your goals! On days that are particularly challenging, every bit of recognition helps, even if it is coming from you.

Be Patient: you might not "get it" the first time around, necessitating the need for more time to master a task or information. Give yourself extensions of deadlines; use

Stay on top of it:

Seniors: Even though those applications are in, you must continue to keep those grades up. Colleges may be asking for mid-year reports, so be sure to abide by these deadlines. Note that your acceptances to college are contingent upon your continued performance in school. Don't forget to make sure you have met all scholarship deadlines! If you have decided where you will be attending college next fall, start paying attention to deadlines for final grade submissions and housing requests.

Juniors: Now that you have your PSAT scores, think about what schools you want to visit this spring and start reserving your spots now. Typically, the Common Application releases its essay topics in March. We like to help our students complete these essays prior to the summer vacation. Call today to schedule your first appointment.

TEST UPDATES

ACT: Here is the link for the latest ACT information: www.act.org

SAT: Here is the link for the latest SAT information: www.collegeboard.org

words of encouragement as you try to figure things out. Don't be afraid to ask for help; sometimes a friendly tip can make a huge difference. On days when you feel run down, take a step away, regroup, and break down the task or the day into smaller chunks or tasks until you are feeling up to doing more.

Be Forgiving: no one is perfect, no one. We all make mistakes, and it is from these mistakes that we learn and grow. Don't beat yourself up...instead, assess the situation and determine what you could have done differently or better, so that the next time you encounter a similar situation, you won't make the same errors.

Be Flexible: there is more than one way to get something done. Sometimes we must think beyond the parameters that we are presented with in order to solve a problem.

Nurture Yourself: make sure you are eating high protein, complex carbohydrate foods; **hydrate** with enough water each day (approximately 2-3 liters of water per day) and avoid food and beverages high in sugar and caffeine as these ingredients will dehydrate; **exercise** is a great way to decrease stress and work off stress; **rest** is important for recharging your battery and enhancing your ability to focus, stay organized, and cope with stress; treat yourself to some **mindfulness** to help you manage the stressors of daily life (apps like Calm, Insight Timer, and Headspace are all helpful).

This Valentine's Day, as you remember to celebrate your love for those you hold near and dear, don't forget to show yourself some love and tenderness! 😊

Preventing the Winter Blues

We made it through a tumultuous first semester, and it would be understandable if students, teachers, and parents are starting to feel burned out. We are offering some suggestions to prevent the onset of the winter blues.

There are three key steps that can prevent a frigid, academic backslide, the first of which is **organization**. At home, students need to have a working area that has some order to it. All necessary items need to be accessible in this area. Writing utensils, paper, tape, staplers, and highlighters are but a few of the items that need to be within arm's reach. The area should be well-lit and free from distractions. Television, cell phones, video games, FaceTime, Skype, Snapchat, Instagram, and texting should be disabled while students are working. It is important to note that some students do indeed concentrate better with background noise. Sound makers (like those from Sharper Image) or music can help students stay on target. Ambient noise, like that which you would find in a coffee shop or

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school cafeteria can be duplicated on apps like Coffivity. Additionally, some students like to spread out when they are doing their homework. The floor and the couch are a great place to achieve this goal. One other note: some students do work successfully when they use Zoom, Google Hangouts, or FaceTime to collaborate on homework assignments. If your student can use these tools to complete their assignments without being distracted, they should be allowed to do so. Finally, to manage group projects, apps like asana.com are wonderful tools to distribute tasks and keep each other on target.

In addition to having an organized workspace, students need to have a tool that they use regularly for keeping track of short and long-term assignments. Some students prefer the school-issued assignment books or their own that they chose from a store like Staples. Ideally, these books contain a calendar page with squares that are large enough to record long-term assignments, projects, and tests-this is particularly true for students who have difficulty with handwriting. Two to four month-at-a-glance calendars are a helpful means of keeping track of exams, long-term assignments and extra-curricular activities, giving students and their families a bird's-eye view of the weeks and months ahead.

Technologically savvy students prefer to use iPads, iPhones, or programs like MyStudyLife to keep track of their assignments. Apps like Google Keep, ToDoIst, or OneNote can also be helpful to stay on top of the workload. Finally, using cellphones or iPads to take photos of the whiteboards and Zoom screens is another good strategy for tracking homework. Students then need to record the homework on a piece of paper or a calendar before they begin their assignments. As long as the school approves the use of these tools, students should be able to use them at their discretion.

Finally, time management can be tricky for some students. This group might benefit from working in 15-minute intervals and breaking for five minutes. A timer can be helpful to mark the beginning and end of each work session as well as each break. Eventually, the student wants to work toward twenty-to-thirty-minute work intervals and five-to-ten-minute breaks. On the other hand, some students find that initiating work is so laborious that once they successfully start working, any type of break will interrupt their productivity.

Along with organization comes the importance of communication and advocacy. Students, teachers, and parents all need to be on the same page. Regardless of the student's age, communication plays an integral role in his or her success. Parents need to keep the lines of communication open with their children. What kind of a



day did (s)he have? What were the highs and what were the lows? What homework does (s)he have and when is it due? Parents should also be in contact with teachers when necessary (more on this in a minute). These days, extraordinary circumstance can hinder productivity and confidence. Communicating this information to the teachers is not only helpful but critical to better assist the student at school and make accommodations where necessary.

Oftentimes students will struggle with material or an assignment. Advocacy is important here. Ideally the student is the person who reaches out for help. But in the situation where a student is too young or is not comfortable advocating for himself, parents need to intervene and alert the teacher to their student's status. Timing is everything, so when it is clear that the student does not understand something, let the teacher know right away. Student silence is often misinterpreted as mastery of material. This miscommunication can be disastrous.

The push to move past the winter humdrums can be overwhelming. The never-ending cycle of rotating virtual and hybrid classes compounded by technical difficulties and general stress and anxiety can make everything seem insurmountable. With the right amount of planning, effort, and communication, your student will find his or her rhythm and meet with success!