

COUNSELING CORNER

Welcome, or welcome back, to the “Counseling Corner.” In each issue of the Families E-Newsletter, the Counseling Corner offers some insight on what your college student might be dealing with at this point in the semester and some suggestions for how you can offer support.

ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE

Classes have started, and freshmen are adjusting to college and possibly to living away from home; their parents, to them being gone. Upperclassmen and their families are re-adjusting to the same. For some students, stress increases mid-September when the “honeymoon” phase ends: homesickness, the work load, and the imperfections of roommates can all hit hard.

Homesickness comes from missing that sense of security and belonging which most of us associate with home. It’s the lack of feeling a comfortable sense of routine in a big new place that leads to feeling homesick. From this perspective it’s easy to understand that while freshmen may be at the greatest risk, transfer students starting at a new school, older students returning to campus, and even commuters adjusting to a new environment can feel homesick too.

Often, understanding the cause and knowing it is temporary can help students cope. Concerned loved ones can remind students of other times they’ve successfully adjusted to new situations. Support and encouragement by phone, text or email are always helpful. Allowing students to come home more frequently due to homesickness is not usually a good solution. Encourage students to tough it out and stay if at all possible. During the first few weeks of the semester, many students are feeling homesick and making the new connections that lead to a sense of belonging. Students who go home while others stay and reach out will have more trouble and take longer to make those connections. So offering to come to campus and take your student out for a meal or the day is a much better solution.

Encourage resident students to attend campus events, find a club to join, and talk to others in their residence halls. If you get a tearful call, suggest that your student focus on the positives, even going so far as to list 3 good things that happened each day. Remind resident students to rely on the support of their CAs.

Commuter students may feel overwhelmed by the process of fitting in and finding comfortable space on campus. Encourage commuter students to stay on campus between classes, study in common areas, join a club, and attend evening events. Remind them Pitt Greensburg’s student body is over 50% commuters – they are not alone! As with residents – the more commuter students stay on campus early on this semester, the more likely they are to develop a sense of belonging here.

If your student is having more difficulty with these adjustments than what is normal for him/her, please encourage a visit to the Counseling Center. Always feel free to contact the Counseling Center yourself with any concerns. We can discuss your individual situation and determine if additional assistance is appropriate.

This year, the Counseling Center has 2 graduate interns working with the director. Alex Mull is completing his MSW from Pitt’s School of Social Work, and Beth Crofutt is completing her MA in Community Counseling from IUP. We’re all here to support your student.

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Director of Counseling