



PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

This is about you, the freshman year transition from family and home, and some of the issues that most freshmen face as they embark on their college career. While we'll point out common pitfalls in the first year journey, more important are the behaviors successful new students exhibit to assure their well being, both academically and personally.

Perhaps, paradoxically, we know that freshman students arrive on campus already very stretched by the high expectations that they have for themselves. High school students know that a bachelor degree is worth money (\$18,000 average annual income for high school graduates vs. \$33,000 for college degree holders). In fact, three out of four of the 1996 freshman class reported that going to college was very important to them so they could make more money and get a better job. They are also optimistic. Over 50% believe that they will be satisfied with the college they choose and that they expect to achieve a "B" or better average.

Coupled with these high expectations are many conflicts in the use of time. These conflicts represent potential pitfalls. Many of these same 1996 freshmen know that they will have to work 6-10 hours per week (50%), spent 6-10 hours each week socializing with friends in high school (25%), spent 3-5 hours partying each month (20%), drank beer or wine while partying (60%), and 1 in 4 spent 6-10 hours each high school week in exercising, watching TV, or both.

These activities in combination with high expectations about grades are a volatile mixture that can lead to tremendous stress. Throw in the fact that you may have a roommate for the first time in your life, your classmates may be strangers at first, and the workload is tougher and the competition higher and in little time you'll learn that managing stress is essential to get the most out of your college years.

No discussion about the transition from home to college, and the choices found in the new freshman freedom of leaving family and friends, would be complete without mentioning briefly a few additional obvious potential issues. Alcohol consumption, particularly binge drinking, is a rampant problem on most campuses today. Casual sex among students, with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases looming as real consequences, is another major issue that students face. Finally, the misuse of drugs, including legal prescription, be they tobacco, barbituates for sleep, or stimulants to aid in staying awake can sabotage academic success.

So what is the new freshman to do? Before you leave home have a plan to implement and promise or "contract" with yourself to take care of your health. To do that decide to:

- ▶ Eat Right - be sure your diet is well balanced and avoids sugary snacks.
- ▶ Get Plenty of Sleep - sleep needs vary by individual, but usually 7-8 hours is typical.
- ▶ Exercise Regularly - the recommendation usually is to exercise at least 3 times a week for at least 20 minutes.
- ▶ Take Time to Relax - relieves the tension and stress.
- ▶ Learn to Manage Your Time - make and follow a daily schedule that includes priority time for classes, reading and writing assignments, exam preparation, meals, exercise, a job, and social activities.
- ▶ Assert Yourself - clearly communicate what you do and don't want out of dates, party situations, and a roommate

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