Most adults 18 and older need between seven and nine hours of sleep, according to The National Sleep Foundation. Yet, college students don’t always make this a priority — and it makes them overtired and overwhelmed.

Getting Quality Sleep.

The experts suggest a few simple tactics to help increase quality sleep:

- Get to bed around the same time each night so the body gets used to a regular sleeping schedule.
- Don’t make the bed a key study space because then it’ll be associated with stressful activity.
- Avoid watching the clock.
- Establish a relaxing routine about a half hour before bed, like taking a shower, reading or listening to music, plus turn off the TV and computer.
- Consider using “white noise” — like a fan — to help fall asleep.
- Try to make the bed as comfortable as possible.
- Finish eating about two hours before bed so the body won’t be working on digestion.
- Avoid exercise right before bed.

Many students are unaware that their sleep deprivation can cause them serious problems — they may be so used to being consistently sleepy that they don’t realize their lack of sleep is unhealthy or abnormal. Good, quality sleep can go a long way in making students sharper, healthier, happier and more in-control individuals.

Sources: The Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov; www.sleepfoundation.org; www.sleep-deprivation.com

Being overtired can cause:

- Moodiness
- Higher susceptibility to illness
- Lack of energy
- Stress
- Anger
- Motor vehicle and machinery-related accidents
- Lack of concentration
- Difficulty retaining new information
Encouraging Students Through Midterms to the Finish Line

Students are facing midterms and Spring Break is around the corner. They’ve almost made it to the halfway point. Whew!

Now comes the trick of pushing themselves forward in order to finish the year on a high note. There are a few little things you can encourage them to do that can make a BIG difference!

**Do a Mind Dump.** Your student likely has a million things on her mind, like starting that 30-page paper and figuring what kind of job she can get for the summer. Instead of letting the list make her dizzy, she can help herself by doing a Mind Dump. It involves grabbing a notebook and jotting down everything on her To Do List. It doesn’t have to be orderly – she can do that later. She just needs to capture what’s on her mind in order to clear her head, get organized and move forward with the things she needs to accomplish.

**Knock Off a Few Lingering Tasks.** Once a week, encourage your student to pick a task or responsibility that has been lingering too long on his To Do list and get it done! By picking just one of these things per week, it becomes more doable and he’ll feel better about not having it hovering over him constantly.

**Plan Some Fun.** We all need things to look forward to, whether it’s a Spring Break trip or taking a walk with friends after dinner. So, it’s a good idea for your student to plan some fun stuff that breaks up all the “have to’s” and “shoulds” on her list.

**Step Away from the Computer.** It’s easy, especially during the midterm push, to spend a lot of time in front of the computer. The eyes sting, the back hurts and sitting all the time stinks! That’s why it’s important for students to step away from the computer now and then so it doesn’t feel like it’s running their lives. It’ll be okay if your student doesn’t check his Facebook page today because he’d rather shoot hoops with some friends. He can return emails tomorrow, once he’s had a good meal. Writing, researching and studying are important, there’s no doubt. Yet, everyone needs to step away from cyberspace now and then to get back into real time.

**Stay Connected.** Students need to reach out to family and friends regularly in order to feel in touch and in tune. So, encourage your student to take time for campus friends, even if it’s studying together or quickly grabbing coffee to catch up. And she should keep up with her community service efforts, too. It’s important to stay connected to others to increase well-being and to keep on going.

**Take Care of Body & Soul.** Students need to eat healthy stuff on a regular basis and get into some solid sleep patterns. Moving their bodies and heading to the health center if they feel a cold coming on is smart, too. A body that is working well supports a healthy heart and mind.

There are a few intense months left this term and your student can really use your encouragement and support to make it to the finish line.

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Low Energy Solutions

A winter slump, sometimes accompanied by sickness, can hit students right about now. To chase the energy-sucking vampires away, here are some simple solutions to suggest…

- Join an intramurals team – regular exercise and social time increase energy levels
- Get outside your room – shaking up your environment can work wonders
- Stop staring at a screen – being engaged offline provides different stimuli
- Sleep well – a well-rested mind and body will automatically have more energy
- Get silly – go on a goofy campus photo shoot with friends for renewed vigor

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“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”

— Johann Von Goethe
Helping Your Busy Student Put Things in Perspective

It’s NOT a contest!

Many students are guilty of it at one point or another: holding “I had less sleep than you did” or “I’m SO busy!” contests. This tends to be a particular phenomenon among student leaders. They swap tales of all-nighters, crammed schedules and three-page To Do lists, almost as a badge of honor, to prove that they are in demand and working hard. Yet, this approach really isn’t good for them. After all, it’s NOT a contest!

Discussion Points

If your student seems caught up in this type of frenzy, there are a few discussion points you can tap into to help him assess what is really going on. For instance…

› The “Why” of It All. What drives him to do all that he is doing? Interest? Fear of life after college? Competition? An inability to say “no”? By getting deep into the “why” behind his actions, you can help him break it down into a healthier approach.

› Use of Time & Energy. What does she enjoy about certain involvements? And does the negative-speak you hear about others (i.e. when she complains about the inefficiency of her student group) indicate that maybe that’s not a healthy use of her time and energy?

› Feeling Valued. How does he feel valued by others, whether it’s you, his siblings, his professors, his advisors or his fellow students? Is he looking for approval or trying to meet perceived expectations?

› Reactions to “Busy.” What are her reactions when someone else talks about being so busy? Admiration? Thinking that they’re showing off? Empathy? Feeling bad for them and offering to help? Help her examine WHY she might have those reactions.

› Managing Time & Tasks. Is he “working smart” to manage time and tasks? Maybe he needs assistance with time management to juggle the multiple things on his plate.

› Pros & Cons. Does she feel that anything in her life is suffering due to her hectic schedule? Sleep? Grades? Making new friends? Time to exercise? Help her look at her overall life to see what’s good and what might be missing.

By addressing this with your busy student before he burns out, you can help him determine how he wants to spend his time and the healthiest ways to accomplish that. Involvement and experiencing all that college has to offer is wise; acting like you’re in a “busy contest” is not. You can help him see the difference.

Why is My Student So Busy?

March can be a really busy month for students, so you may not hear from them as often as you’d like. The reasons are numerous:

• Midterm exams and papers are fast approaching
• Student organizations they’ve joined are busy planning end-of-the-term activities
• They’ve made more friends on campus and are spending time with them
• They are job searching for the summer or after graduation
• Community service involvements have deepened, as folks learn how reliable and competent they are

Try not to take it personally, as being engaged is what helps many students stay – and succeed – in school. Reach out to let your student know that you’re there and interested in hearing about his life. He’ll likely have tales to tell!
Spring Cleaning

Thankfully, it’s almost springtime! And students can spruce up their spaces with some simple spring cleaning tips…

- Moving furniture to do a thorough sweep and vacuum
- Thinning out their winter clothes as they realize what they haven’t been wearing, so they can donate those pieces or take them home
- Disinfecting items that get a lot of use – and germs – such as phones, doorknobs, handles and more
- Wading through collected papers so they can shred certain items, file others and recycle the rest
- Washing their blankets and comforters
- Scrubbing out their wastebaskets
- Thoroughly cleaning bathrooms (if they have their own)
- Getting reacquainted with the top of their desk!

Spring cleaning gives students an opportunity to start fresh and get to some of those tasks that get lost in the shuffle. Share your own tips as they continue developing cleaning competencies that will last them a lifetime!

A Safe Spring Break

If your student is traveling somewhere for Spring Break, you can offer the following reminders to make sure he or she stays safe…

- **Use the Buddy System** – In a new place, you’ll stay safest if you stick together.
- **Be Smart about Alcohol** – If you choose to drink, know where your drink is coming from, don’t trust strangers, and keep your wits about you so your well-being and judgment are never compromised.
- **Don’t Do Anything Illegal** – The consequences can be dire if you get arrested, especially in a foreign country.
- **Protect Your Eyes and Skin** – Wear sunscreen, use sunglasses with proper UV protection and also have a hat.
- **Don’t Go with Strangers** – Trusting unknown people can end in tragedy.
- **Take Care** – Carry your wallet close to your body. Know fire escape routes from hotel rooms. Keep a clear head in order to keep yourself – and your friends – safe.

A safe Spring Break is very possible, as long as students stay smart!

How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Does your student know what to do in case of fire? Whether he lives on or off campus, this lifetime skill is an important one to master. You can help by sharing this simple acronym with him…

**PASS**

- **Pull the pin** – this allows you to discharge the extinguisher
- **Aim at the base of the fire** – you want to hit the fuel, not the flames
- **Squeeze the top handle or lever** – this depresses a button to release the pressurized extinguisher agent
- **Sweep from side to side** – do this until the fire is out, starting from a safe distance away and then moving forward – keep an eye on the area once the fire is out to make sure it doesn’t re-ignite

Source: Oklahoma State University EHS, http://ehs.okstate.edu/modules/exting/howto.htm

Bonus!

Another benefit of spring cleaning now is that students won’t have as much heavy-duty cleaning to do at the end of the year when they’re trying to juggle final exams and move-out.