

Time Management: Time Flies When Your Student is at College

You just don't understand it. Your student only has one or two classes each day, but he calls in a panic after missing an assignment deadline or overwhelmed with a huge assignment due tomorrow morning. You wonder... what exactly is he doing with the other 20 plus hours in

this day?

One of the greatest challenges experienced by college students is time management. Managing the major priorities in their life related to academics, a job, co-curricular activities, personal wellness and a social life can often leave students feeling overwhelmed and hopeless, ultimately leading to bad habits such as procrastination and poor academic performance.

So, the next time your student calls to share that he did poorly on a test – because he didn't study, because he overslept, because he was up all night with friends, and slept through his scheduled study group – consider challenging him on how he might manage his time better with some easy “challenge and support” time management tips.

How Can I Help?

- Help him assess how he is allocating his time by suggesting that he keep a time log for one week.
- Encourage him to look for the “waste baskets” in his time log. Waste baskets are large chunks of time that disappear and are wasted. Ask him how he can avoid those “waste baskets” in the future.
- Encourage him to identify his “prime times” for studying, socializing,

Prioritizing Tasks

It is easy to create a quick method for ranking tasks based on high, medium or low priorities. Consider using “signals” for levels of priorities such as:

- A, B, C
- 1, 2, 3
- Symbols
- Highlight with different colors



Time Log

- ✓ Keep a simple record of how time was spent—including sleep, meals, interruptions, and socializing.
- ✓ Account for blocks of time in increments of 15 or 30 minutes.
- ✓ Keep the log for at least seven straight days.
- ✓ After completing the time log for one week, review it and cross check it with self-perceptions of how time is used.

sleeping, etc. When does he feel best or perform best?

- Help your student learn how to prioritize his time. Ask him to create a list of tasks and activities he needs or wants to do, then rank order from most important to least important.
- Suggest that he create a daily to-do list to organize his daily priorities and feel the satisfaction of crossing off the priorities he accomplishes. It's a great feeling!
- Help him understand the importance of saying “NO” when opportunities arise that don't mesh with his priorities.
- Encourage this common advice offered by college professors: students should study two hours for every one hour in class.
- Promote the idea of breaking huge tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks, over time. It will be less overwhelming and your student will feel like he is accomplishing the larger task little by little.
- Suggest he assess the distractions that sometimes take his attention away from his priority tasks. Instant messages, television programs, email, and phone calls can be managed better when he controls when they are received and responded to.
- Send a care package filled with tools that will support him in his efforts to better manage his time. Tools to consider including are: a planner, a journal, a dry-erase calendar, a bulletin board, post-it notes, a watch, highlighters, and an alarm clock.