

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

Self-Responsibility



DEFINING SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it, I know I can achieve it."

Jesse Jackson

Webster's Dictionary defines responsible as being "able to answer for one's conduct and obligations," in a manner that is "trustworthy." The term responsible is also described as "being able to choose for oneself between right and wrong." Self-responsibility can refer to an individual engaging in a decision making process that promotes personal choices that affect their conduct and obligations. Self-responsibility can also be a sign of self-determination (for example, recognizing how they choose to act, especially when deciding on issues important to their personal interests). Therefore, how you as a student assume self-responsibility in your daily life reveals information about your values, character, and attitude. (For example, your adherence to a code of principled or imaginative values). Self-responsibility also entails critical thinking strategies. These strategies empower an individual to develop their skills in reasoning, problem solving, devising and evaluating arguments and making inferences that enhance their quality of life and achievement of personal goals. Finally, self-responsibility involves preserving individual mental, spiritual and physical health. As a student, learning how to attain balance and maintain wellness as a whole will limit factors such as stress and depression (obviously, these factors can prohibit a successful college career). While you have been raised to be aware of the benefits of self-responsibility, learning how to integrate daily actions requires a sense of control over your life.



A STRONG FOUNDATION

The rich man plans for tomorrow, the poor man for today.

Source: (Chinese)

As a student, self-responsibility may be the awareness of how your choice to practice an effective study behavior positively affects achieving the objective of learning a subject successfully; because you understand the material you are studying, you are more likely to pass the exam. You should also know the benefits and importance of sleep, proper nutrition, good hygiene, healthy relationships, regular physical exercise, time management, and communication skills in regard to responsibility to self and to others while being at college. While you may have already been taught basic strategies that help you assume the quality of self-responsibility, you may benefit from the support of faculty, staff, campus services and peers to grow and develop the best practices in this area. Self-responsibility should be taught in ways that promote “thinking around situations, in seeing potential consequences of actions rather than taking the first thought and acting upon it. The child is taught reflection, introspection, reasoning, and logic. As students progress in these ways of thinking and behaving, social capacity and wellness evolve. First there is sustenance of personal need; then group need; and finally, students emerge as champions of relationship, able to look at the needs of many, embracing the concept of multicultural and multinational interests and needs. Thus prepared, students enter the world of work and adult responsibility able to share the knowledge of personal strengths, acceptance of self, concern and care for those who are gifted and talented in other ways, and excitement about the challenges of the future. For a person thus prepared, it is not just excitement about a personal future, but a shared and global concept of future. For a nation thus prepared, the philosophical depth, emotional stability, and experience in building and maintaining community offer world leadership in constructing a positive future and advancing the well-being of humanity” (Ellsworth, 1998). J'Anne Ellsworth, 1998 Northern Arizona University

TAKE CONTROL OF YOURSELF

Don't look where you feel, but where you slipped.

Source: (Liberia)

In his book, *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*, Nathaniel Branden provides strategies that he has identified in the practice of self-responsibility.



The practice of self-responsibility entails these realizations:

- I am responsible for the achievements of my desires.
- I am responsible for my choices and actions.
- I am responsible for the level of consciousness I bring to my work.
- I am responsible for the level of consciousness I bring to my relationships.
- I am responsible for my behavior with other people—coworkers, associates, customers, spouse, children, friends.
- I am responsible for how I prioritize my time.
- I am responsible for the quality of my communications.
- I am responsible for my personal happiness.
- I am responsible for accepting or choosing the values by which I live.
- I am responsible for raising my self-esteem. (Branden, 1994).

Nathaniel Branden also identifies the fact that by accepting personal responsibility you must realistically recognize that there are some situations and circumstances in which matters beyond your control can and do occur. When this happens, you must discern what is happening and use good judgment in recognizing the limits of your self-responsibility.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

A feeble effort will not fulfill the self.

Source: (Africa)

You should be aware of the importance of getting enough rest, following good hygiene practices, taking vitamins, having a healthy diet and engaging in regular physical exercise to help ward off the common illnesses of being at college.

Stress

The transition to college, while a very positive thing, has a certain amount of stress surrounding it. Stress, along with the adaptation to a new schedule and possibly not getting enough sleep, can negatively affect the immune system. Stress-related illnesses



affect college students everywhere. College students are used to an expectation of high performance. With that, comes a baseline level of stress. It can be a real challenge for you to realize when you are stressed, because for many students it is commonplace.

While it can be hard to sense, those who feel overwhelmed should seek help. If you sense that stress is affecting your personality or the way you interact with other people, that is a definite red flag. Sleep, exercise and learning how to prioritize tasks are vital to stress management. It's also important to keep the lines of communication open with parents and friends to discuss problems.

Depression

The American College Health Association National College Health Assessment reports that, in 2006, depression was the fourth most common health issue affecting academic performance. Depression is definitely something to be aware of. You should know the signs of depression, which include sleep disturbance, deterioration in academic performance, loss of appetite, disconnection from friends, weight loss or weight gain. Depression can be difficult to diagnose early on. Many of the signs of depression can also be signs of more simple adjustment issues. If you think that maybe you need to talk to someone, that is probably a good time to seek out help. If you feel you might need help, act on that feeling.

Risky behavior

You should be aware of decisions related to high-risk behavior that can occur in college, such as alcohol and drug use and sexual behavior. Be aware that these are issues that most students will encounter. Familiarize yourself with campus resources and utilize them as they are there to assist you. The campus health center offers information and programs for dealing with alcohol abuse and how to protect against sexually transmitted diseases in addition to other services.

Know your health history

It is important for parents and you to have open communication about the student's health history. You should understand your own health since you will be increasingly responsible for it. It's also good to know your insurance information. In our society, health insurance equals access. You should be aware of what kind of coverage you have. Colleges have insurance programs that students can purchase and many students may be on their parents' plan; regardless, be aware of what coverage that plan provides. It is also best to bring a copy of the insurance card to school. Starting college is a real life



transition and many students look at it as an opportunity to change things in their life and claim their independence. One thing you should not change without consulting their health care provider is stopping or changing medications. If you have been on chronic illness medications, like those for allergies, asthma and mental health conditions, you should not stop them on your own, unless advised by a health practitioner. Doing so can be quite dangerous. Become familiar with the physical and mental health services offered on campus. The faculty, staff, and administrators are concerned about students and their well-being. In most cases, the resources are out there, you just need to find them.

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