



Family and School

“Sources of Inspiration,
Sources of Stress”

Adapted from Urban Learners, Serious About College Success, by Rubie M. Malone, 2003.

Parent/Family Stressors

- Parents/Families of urban college students
 - This may be the first son or daughter to attend college or the first in the family
 - Significant Event
 - Personal Pressures
 - Emotional Pressures
 - Financial Pressures
 - Unanticipated Stresses in the Family

Money

- Even with Financial Aid or other scholarships
 - Urban students may have to work full or part time.
 - May still not have enough money to cover all expenses for college such as books
 - May not be aware of other forms of assistance
 - Urban students may not have any other type of adult assistance for additional monetary needs.
 - Parent/Family choices about which child to spend their resources on ... (if any!)

Urban Student Status

- Pressure to live up to family hopes
- Pressure to achieve same success as other siblings or parents
- Hero status
 - Confusion
 - Fear
 - Burden for rest of family

Family Support, Yes or No?

- Varying levels
- High degree of expectation
- High degree of emotional support
- Strong belief in oneself (encouragement from family)
- Role model or mentors that stress perseverance
- Clear rules and standards with respect to educational goals as part of family culture

Shared Positive Feelings

- “Each person in my family motivates me...”
- “When I have term papers to complete, my mother is helpful in finding material for me. She has come with me to the library. Mom likes to be helpful and will do anything to help me graduate. I’m the only family member to attend college.” (p. 157)

Shared Positive Feelings

- “My parents told me not to work a part-time job. They would rather see me use the time to study.”
- “I want to be able to get a good job so I can buy a house for my family and take care of them.”
- “My mother tells me I am special. She makes sure the house is quiet and that no one disturbs my study time.”
(p. 157)

Shared Mixed Messages of Support

- Family may want you to do well but do little to actually help you.
- Their expectations may actually hinder you by placing more obligations on you.
- They may not understand the difficulties of college.
- Family may be so caught up in survival that they can not help you emotionally or monetarily.

Shared Mixed Messages of Support

- “When I work and get paid, instead of buying the necessary things I need for school, my mother expects me to give her a portion of that money. This is very stressful at times because I have to do without something for school until the next payday.”
- “No one is really involved in what I do; they just expect me to do well.” (p.158)

Negative Family Situations

- Powerless or Depression
- Illness
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Incarceration
- Absence of mother or father
- Absence of any family
- Abusive Family or Relationships

Shared Negative Messages

- “Since I never see my parents, I have no idea whether they care or not.”
- “My parents don’t even know I am in college.”
- “If any of my mother’s friends were to ask her how I’m doing she wouldn’t have a clue.”
- “My mother in law thinks I should stay home and watch the kids, education is not for women.”

Shared Negative Messages

- These messages are painful and distressing.
- Can effect your self-esteem.
- Can effect your academic performance.
- Can distract you from academic and personal responsibilities.
- Can make it difficult for you to trust others and ask for help or guidance.

Balancing College and Family

- Parents may not understand the demands of college.
- Parents have to recognize your need for quiet study time or the inability to always be available for babysitting or other routine family obligations.
- Your parents and family may not be comfortable with your new found freedom and college friends.

Balancing College and Family

- Students may not understand the demands of college.
- Students have to recognize their need for quiet study time or the inability to always be available for babysitting or other routine family obligations. They have to be assertive.
- Social life obligations have to change.
- Students have to become more independent.

Come to terms with your family

- Families may expect too much from you.
- You need to be assertive but reasonable.
- Many students have a painful realization that achieving the goal of college will involve breaking away from some of your family restrictions and expectations.
- This can be done in a positive manner that will allow you to keep lines of communication open.

Keys to Improving Family Support

- Learn to communicate
 - Take emotion out of your communication with your family. If you are calm and can listen to their views without exploding, you may get more out of the encounter.
 - Be respectful when discussing

Keys to Improving Family Support

- Keep a positive attitude
 - Ask yourself what you expect from others, do you expect too much from others? Is your study time more important than anyone in the families leisure time?
 - Are you tense, nervous or angry? Do you take out your academic worries on your family?
 - You must work to grow and mature, accept your family for what it is and if necessary start to break away.

Keys to Improving Family Support

- Embrace Your Family Involvement
 - Don't exclude your family from your college life, don't shut them out or act superior.
 - Be willing to discuss your schedule and awards or disappointments.
 - Thank them for their support.

Keys to Improving Family Support

- Balance Your Responsibilities
 - How much should you work, and how much do you have to work?
 - Accept that you may have to choose one or the other.
 - If you work, be upfront with your employer.
 - Accept that you can not depend on always having time to study at work.
 - Caring for siblings may have to be cut back

Keys to Improving Family Support

- Evaluate Your Level of Commitment
 - You must assume responsibility for the academic obligations that you have accepted.
 - Remember only you can stop yourself.
 - Evaluating your relationship with your family may be difficult but if there are issues that directly effect the goals that you set for yourself then you may need to limit the amount of time you spend with your family.
 - You may need to make hard choices in order to succeed in your academic goals.
