Spring break is right around the corner, and some of you may be planning to get away for the week. If so, we want to offer some reminders to keep you safe during this time.

You may be the kind of person who likes to be spontaneous, but making a few advance plans can help keep you safe while you’re away. Whether you plan to travel alone or with friends, make an itinerary so that someone will know where you are. It’s easier for someone to know that you are missing if that person knows where you should be. When time really counts, that is important.

Consider your limits. It may seem appealing to drink from a bottomless keg, but that kind of behavior has sometimes terrible consequences. Alcohol and other substances impair your judgment so you may think you can safely dive off a cliff into the ocean or trust people who aren’t trustworthy. Have fun, but stay in control.

If your plans include "hooking up," make sure you pack protection so that you are ready for the moment. What you do ought to stay where you do it and not follow you home in the form of an unwanted pregnancy or STI such as hepatitis or herpes.

Even if you’re not planning a wild and crazy excursion for spring break, it’s important to keep safety in mind. Working in your yard or cleaning the attic can pose hazards, too. If you haven’t been active for a while, be sure to pace yourself and drink plenty of fluids.

Regardless of your plans, remember that you are loved and would be missed if anything were to happen. Therefore, have lots of fun and get some rest, and then come back to school safe and ready for another eight weeks.

Upcoming Metro Events

You don’t have to travel far from home to find interesting things to do this Spring Break. Lots of things are happening here in the metro and in nearby locations.

The Thunder have two home games that week: March 18 versus Charlotte and March 20 versus Toronto.

March 13 at the Oklahoma City Arena, WrestleMania comes to town.

On March 12, Rascal Flatts performs at the Oklahoma City Arena and Bleu Edmonson is at the Wormy Dog Saloon. On March 15, Flogging Molly performs at the Diamond Ballroom.

Later, on March 19, Bill Maher is at the Civic Center Music Hall.

Add to this all of the restaurants, parks, casinos, and new movie releases, and you can find yourself overbooked in no time.

Of course, if you’re inclined to just put your feet up and rest your eyes for a while, that is always in season, too.
Tips for Effective Communication

One of Stephen Covey’s seven habits is for us to understand before trying to be understood. Yet, many of us want so desperately to be heard that we may damage our relationships by not communicating well. One cornerstone to good communication (and, in turn, relationships) is to learn to listen well. Really focus your attention on what the other person is saying. Show interest, and if necessary, repeat back what the person has said.

Next, think about what you want to say before you say it. Just blurtling out the first thing that comes to mind may cause hurt feelings and not advance the true message you want to convey. Avoid sounding accusatory by using “I statements” to express your feelings about things. This helps keep the focus on the issue rather than on what’s right or wrong with each other.

All is not fair in love and war, so play fair when discussing sensitive topics. We may feel good (for a moment) if we can produce a longer list of “gotchas” than the other person, but this does nothing to resolve the situation at hand.

Pay attention to nonverbal cues. Words alone often mean very little, but Americans tend to miss some very important messages sent by tone, facial expression, and body language. Be aware of what the other person is saying without saying a word.

Be Financially Healthy with your Credit

There are times when even the most fiscally prudent people make mistakes with their finances. In today’s tough economic times, that can wreak havoc with trying to make purchases, rent an apartment, or even find a job. Here are some things you can do to improve your credit score and get yourself to a healthier place financially.

1. Get a copy of your credit reports. You are entitled to a free copy from all three major credit bureaus once a year and any time you’ve been turned down for a loan. Sometimes what you find on them will shock you.

2. Dispute any errors. Mistakes happen, and sometimes legitimate situations weigh down your score. Clean up whatever is inaccurate and pay attention to changes.

3. Avoid new credit card purchases. Many of us have learned the simple beauty of buy now, pay later. If you’re already in a bad financial situation, however, this could spell doom.

4. Pay off any past due balance. Your payment history represents 35% of your credit score. This may hurt, but you have to get current on your payments (and ideally pay more than the monthly minimum).

5. Avoid new credit card applications. Financial institutions continue to bombard us with offers that seem to good to be true—usually because they are.

6. Keep your accounts open. Closing accounts lowers your credit limit and may make your score lower. Once you’ve paid a balance down to zero, put the card away so you won’t continue to use it.

7. Pay off a debt. You may need to contact your creditors to see what kind of deal they will make to get at least some of their money.

8. Seek professional help. Your bank or a community agency can help you get on track.
Add Some Color (and Nutrition) to Your Life

Have you fallen into a nutritional rut when it comes to planning meals? Is everything that enters your mouth a shade of beige? Does trying to understand nutrition make your head hurt? You probably are not alone. However, you can jazz up your eating, and increase your nutritional savvy just by learning a few basic colors.

**Red** fruits and vegetables are rich in lycopene, ellagic acid, Quercetin, and Hesperidin. Although these names sound alien, these nutrients reduce the risk of prostate cancer, lower blood pressure, and reduce tumor growth. The also lower LDL cholesterol levels, scavenge harmful free-radicals, and support joint tissue.

Fruits and vegetables in this category include, beets, cherries, red apples, cranberries, grapefruit, red onions, raspberries, strawberries, rhubarb, tomatoes, and watermelon.

**Yellow/Orange** fruits and vegetables include apricots, cantaloupe, carrots, mangoes, oranges, pumpkin, peaches, pineapple, yellow figs, yellow apples, yellow peppers, yellow summer squash, sweet corn, and sweet potatoes. They contain beta-carotene, flavonoids, potassium, and vitamin C. These nutrients work with magnesium and calcium to build strong and healthy bones. They also promote collagen formation and reduce age-related macular degeneration.

**Green** vegetables and fruit contain chlorophyll, fiber, lutein, calcium, folate, vitamin C, calcium, and beta-carotene. These foods help to normalize digestion, support retinal health and vision, and boost the immune system.

This color category includes artichokes, asparagus, avocados, broccoli, cucumbers, green beans, honeydew melon, okra, limes, watercress, and zucchini.

**Blue/Purple** foods contain many of the same nutrients as the other color categories, but are also a major provider of resveratrol. These nutrients support healthy digestion because they are a rich source of fiber. They boost immune system activity, improve calcium and other mineral absorption, and fight inflammation.

Included in this color scheme are blackberries and blueberries, black currants, eggplant, grapes, plums, pomegranates, purple potatoes, purple asparagus, purple cabbage, purple figs, and raisins.

**White** vegetables and fruits include bananas, cauliflower, garlic, ginger, jicama, kohlrabi, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, shallots, turnips, white corn, white peaches, and white nectarines.

This category provides us with beta-glucans, EGCG, SDG, and lignans. These nutrients boost immune functioning. They also activate B and T cells, reduce the risk of colon, breast, and prostate cancers. They balance hormone levels which reduces the risk of hormone-related cancers.

So get out of that boring nutritional rut and let these colors spark some healthful fun in your eating.

Use Color to Brighten Your Mood

There are different theories about how and why we perceive different colors, but we know that different colors may influence people in a variety of ways. Color therapy (chromotherapy) is a holistic to medicine that associates different light frequencies (wave length vibrations) to different organ systems. **Red** is a hot color that can stimulate and excite. It is associated with strength, courage, ambition, and sexuality. Benefits may include overcoming negative thoughts, self-confidence, and an appetite stimulant. **Orange** is warm and joyful and is associated with sociability, success, and happiness. Its benefits include optimism, lowered inhibitions, and enjoyable relationships. The color **yellow** can range from warm to hot. It is associated with mental clarity, cheerfulness, optimism, and self-esteem. Yellow may aid memory and concentration, build confidence, ease depression symptoms, and help with decision-making. **Green**, the master color, is cool and refreshing. Associated with harmony, balance, peace, and renewal, green may help reduce stress, help us feel calm and rested, and increase our sense of emotional balance. **Blue** is a cold color. Blue may help calm hyperactivity in children, support clear communication, and foster a sense of peace. Surrounding ourselves with colors we like can help keep us centered and well.
Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College.

- Services to Students with Disabilities, including providing accommodations for documented disabilities, interpreting and captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing students, and assistive technology.
- Professional counseling by a licensed provider.
- Learning support specialist to assist with academic needs such as learning styles, study skills, test-taking, and general health and wellness issues.
- TRIO Grant Programs (Upward Bound and Trio Student Support Services) designed to help first generation college students learn more about college before they arrive and how to be more successful once they are here.

For more information about our services and how to access them, please visit our website at http://www.occc.edu/support/ or call us at 682-7520. We are located on the first floor of the Main Building near SEM Entry 3.

**Healthy Potato Salad**

- 2 pounds small red potatoes, quartered  
- 5 hard-boiled eggs  
- 3/4 cup fat-free mayonnaise  
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar  
- 1 teaspoon sugar  
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard  
- 1/2 teaspoon salt  
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper  
- 1 large, sweet onion, chopped  
- 2 celery ribs, chopped  
- 1/2 cup chopped green onions  
- 1/2 cup julienned sweet red pepper  
- 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley

Place potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 12-14 minutes. Drain. Cool for 30 minutes.

Slice eggs in half. Discard yolks or save for another use. Cut the whites into 1/2 inch pieces.

In a large bowl, combine the mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Add the potatoes, egg whites, onion, celery, green onions, red pepper, and parsley; toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours or until chilled.

Per 3/4 cup serving:

- 110 calories
- 1 gram fat
- 2 milligrams cholesterol
- 305 milligrams sodium
- 22 grams carbohydrate
- 3 grams fiber
- 4 grams protein