Successfully Transitioning from College to Work

For thousands of students across the U. S., May is a month filled with joy, hope, and anticipation. This is the month when most college students get to reap the rewards of their hard work and dedication by earning a college degree. This time of excitement can also be stressful as students contemplate what lies beyond the college campus. In many ways, college prepares people by giving them necessary knowledge and skills, but there may still be some differences that new graduates should be prepared for.

For many new graduates, one of the biggest differences between being a student and being a career professional is who owns control of time. Successful students are often those who understand when they are most alert and what their preferences are for scheduling classes. Class schedules are typically much more flexible than work schedules, and colleges tend to be more understanding in working with students to help them catch up if they get behind. Employers have set schedules and deadlines must be met.

In college, we’re given some freedom to try new things and to think outside of the box. We can also have an occasional meltdown and pour our feelings out to professors or other staff on campus. In a professional work space, we may still feel things as intensely as ever, but our behaviors must reflect that we are in control of ourselves. Being high in emotional intelligence (the ability to behave appropriately in response to our feelings) can be very important in getting, and keeping, employment.

When people first come to college, and often as they are graduating, they believe that their major program dictates the kinds of jobs they can get. This is true of highly specialized majors such as nursing or engineering, but more liberal arts kinds of degrees can set one up for a variety of careers. Sit down with someone in a career services office to identify your skills and strengths, and then match those to the job of your dreams. You may still have some work to do in order to make it into that ideal, but you’ll be able to get your foot in the door. If you’re the kind of person who has always asked what the least is that you must do in order to get a grade, you will have to start asking what more you can do (and sometimes for free) so that you gain more skills and responsibilities. This shows that you have initiative and drive and eventually sets you up to move into the position of your dreams.

College gives us many choices on how we take classes and complete them in addition to when we take them. If we prefer working alone, we have that option. If we’d rather work in groups, we have that option. If we prefer to do homework late in the evening, we have that option. Employers tell us how, when, and where we are going to work. We have to learn to complete a task as it is given to us because that is what’s expected. No matter how we feel about collaborating with others, we have to learn how to accomplish things both on our own and with others.

As with classroom success, if you find you are having some difficulty, ask for the help you need and be receptive to getting it.

Happy Graduation from Student Support Services.

Regardless of your career, being able to work with others is a desirable skill.
Friends form a foundation for our overall health and well-being.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is a Federal and state level department that strives to promote health and well-being among persons with mental health and/or substance abuse issues. While the agency works with a specific target population, the ideas and strategies they provide can help enhance anyone’s life. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as not simply being the absence of disease. This is important for us to note because we often believe that as long as we don’t have a medical illness that we are well. SAMHSA promotes the idea that there are eight dimensions of wellness that we must consider if we want to be wholly well and functional.

Physical. This is the aspect of health that is most often considered and addressed by people. It involves getting adequate sleep, physical activity, and nutrition to keep our bodies operating as they should. Too often, we believe that if we are not athletic or engage in highly strenuous activities that we cannot benefit from exercise. Walking, however, is one of the best activities we can engage in to keep us healthy and fit. Drinking plain water and eating a variety of foods that are as natural as possible also fuels our bodies and keeps them functioning well.

Intellectual. We can help ourselves immensely by finding ways to keep our minds busy and sharp. Actively seeking knowledge helps us. We can take a formal class, or we may do our own research on topics of interest. Reading, solving puzzles, and having conversations are all excellent ways to keep our brains working.

Occupational. Our work is an important source of ego strength for us. Finding meaningful work, whether it is paid or voluntary, enhances our sense of self-worth and value.

Financial. Handling our personal finances can be one of the most stressful activities that we do on a regular basis. Whether we earn too little to meet our basic needs, or we mishandle what we have and don’t cover our basic needs, the stress we feel because of money wreaks havoc on our health and our relationships. Most banks and credit unions have financial planners and educational materials to help you get a better sense of your cents.

Emotional. Our emotions are an important component of who we are, but feelings tend to be less respected in our culture. In order to cope effectively with life and to have healthy relationships, we must learn to express our emotions well.

Social. We are designed to interact with other people. Having a strong social support group of family and friends makes it easier for us to handle the ups and downs of life.

Environmental. Whether at work or at home, our environments should reflect those things that make us feel safe and secure. They should also reflect who we are as individuals. The right environment enhances who we are and makes us feel that we belong.

Spiritual. Spirituality is often confused with religion, but they are not the same. While those who are spiritual may believe there is a higher power or some greater source outside of ourselves, they don’t necessarily subscribe to the idea of organized religion. Whether we self-identify as “religious” or not, having spiritual beliefs helps us find meaning and purpose in our lives. This feeling keeps us more stable and focused when there is uncertainty or when bad things happen in the world.

Our wellness in each of these eight dimensions is tightly interconnected with our wellness in each of the others. To be truly well, then, is to have balance in our lives. Taking care of our mind, body, and soul helps us insure that we are addressing all aspects of our lives and health. If even one dimension is not well, we should seek help to make things better.
Healthy Ways to Cope with Tragic News

Tragedies are events that leave us feeling shocked, scared, overwhelmed, and helpless. They may impact us personally, such as the sudden death of a loved one, or more distantly, as in watching the bombing of the Boston Marathon. We may feel an array of emotions in the days and weeks that follow an event. If we watch the news or follow social media, we may have a heightened sense of fear and apprehension. There are strategies, however, that can help you cope with the bad news in life.

First, acknowledge and share your feelings. Pretending that you are unaffected or denying your feelings can lead to behaviors that are less appropriate and helpful in your coping and healing process. These could include eating or drinking too much, not eating, not sleeping, and so forth. Such unhealthy ways of coping do nothing to address how you feel or offer solutions to the problem. Taking steps to validate your feelings and to get them outside of you (by talking to others, journaling, or drawing, for example), you are better able to identify the problem and how you wish to deal with it.

It is also important to be supportive and listen to others who may be affected. Keeping the proverbial “stiff upper lip” only delays the healing process. It may also discourage others from talking about the situation which also slows their healing.

Utilize support groups in your area. Losses take time to resolve. Allow others to provide real support (bringing you meals, washing your dishes, watching your kids, etc.) as well as emotional support (listening to you and encouraging you). If your grief and pain are so intense that you lose the ability to function or begin having thoughts of dying, then it’s time to ask for professional help. OCCC employees can request help through the college’s Employee Assistance Program. OCCC Students can go to the Office of Student Support Services. A variety of agencies exist in most communities, but you can always start with the local health department if you can’t afford private counseling or don’t know how to locate one.

Keep your life as normal as possible. This may sound strange, but maintaining as much of your daily routine as possible can help you focus on surviving the event that has disrupted your life. Eat and sleep as you should, and be sure to continue any medications that you are on.

Plan family time. This can give you opportunities to talk about the situation and to feel connected to other people. Older children may need to ask questions and vent in order to understand what has happened. This may be painful for you, but it is important that you not shut down the communication. Doing so may lead the child to keep his or her emotions bottled up or to express them in less positive ways. Young children may lack the language to adequately express themselves. They can benefit from drawing pictures or from play-acting or using toys to act out their feelings.

Know your limits. You may assume the role of care-giver for others, but you must remember to have someone looking out for your best interests, too. It’s important to replenish yourself so that you have enough energy to give.

Turn off the TV/computer/cell phone/other devices. The media plays an important role in keeping us informed about what is going on in the world, but there is a definite bias toward reporting all the bad things that happen. If you are already stressed and upset, ongoing coverage of that tragedy or of other ones can put you into an emotional overload. It is okay to limit your exposure to only what you can handle.

Remember that time heals our wounds in time. It is unreasonable to expect yourself to be okay in a matter of days, but you will be okay in your own time.

We can’t always keep bad things from happening to us, and authorities can’t always protect us. We can, however, develop coping strategies to get through life’s rough patches.

Children can be very resilient if they are given a chance to express themselves and work through their fears.
Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College. All services are confidential and free to current students.

- 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 licensed providers.
- Learning support specialists 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.

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**Pan-Roasted Salmon with Collards and Radish Raita**

4 ounces daikon or white turnip, peeled and shredded (about 1/2 cup)
1/4 English hothouse cucumber, grated (about 1/2 cup)
1 cup plain 2% Greek yogurt
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
Pinch of cayenne pepper
Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
2 garlic cloves, sliced
2 bunches collard greens, center ribs and stems removed, leaves cut into 1 inch strips (about 14 cups)
4 6-ounce pieces skin-on salmon fillets
2 red radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced
1 tablespoon Sherry vinegar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. To make the raita, squeeze excess liquid from daikon and cucumber. Mix with yogurt, lemon juice, mint, and cayenne in a small bowl; season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large heavy pot over medium heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, about a minute. Add collard greens to pot, reduce heat to low, cover and cook, tossing occasionally, until tender, about 10-15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large ovenproof skillet over medium heat. Season fish with salt and pepper; cook skin side down until skin is crisp, 5-8 minutes. Transfer to oven (do not turn fish); roast until opaque in center, about 4 minutes.

Add radishes and vinegar to collard greens; season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. Divide greens, salmon, and reserved raita among plates.

Per Serving:
370 calories; 18 grams fat; 3 grams fiber

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Eating fish at least 3 times a week while reducing meat consumption is a good way to boost your overall health and wellness. Adding more vegetables and physical activity helps even more.