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What First-Year Students Say, Mean, and Need to Succeed in College

Disclaimers



No one student is represented in the portraits, descriptions, and examples (except my daughter!).



All photos are from Shutterstock and are not intended to represent specific students.



Some issues pale in comparison to students who face in terms of homelessness, poverty, and food insecurity.

By the Numbers



4 years



250 students



3,000 journal entries



250 final essays



5,250 pages

By the Numbers

1.3 million+ words

7 Themes



Theme # 1: Procrastination

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Procrastination worked for them in high school.

They never learned how to manage their time effectively.

They overestimate their academic abilities.

They underestimate how much time new tasks will take.

They are unsure of what tasks they should be engaged in outside of class.

Theme # 1: Procrastination

- Intensive, repetitive, ongoing skill building for time management.
- Low-stakes assignments early in the semester to check time management strategies.
- Scaffolding of assignments to build in “check points.”
- Opportunity to reflect on their strategies and adjustments.





Theme # 2: Loneliness

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Technology has kept them from developing friend-making skills.

Small talk is difficult and awkward.

They have difficulty making new friends.

The Real Campus Scourge



By [Frank Brunl](#)

Sept. 2, 2017



Alone, with all these people around. In a survey of nearly 28,000 students on 51 campuses by the [American College Health Association](#) last year, more than 60 percent said that they had “felt very lonely” in the previous 12 months. Nearly 30 percent said that they had felt that way in the previous two weeks.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/opinion/sunday/college-freshman-mental-health.html>

Theme #2: Loneliness

- Faculty and staff who recognize that loneliness is a real issue.
- Intentional, continuous programming that encourages socialization.
- Intentional, regular classroom strategies for socialization and group work.
- Coaching for meeting new people and making small talk.





Theme #3: Anxiety

Unsure of their
choices

Concerned about the
financial, family, and
personal implications
of their choices

Theme # 3: Anxiety

U.S. • COLLEGE

Record Numbers of College Students Are Seeking Treatment for Depression and Anxiety — But Schools Can't Keep Up

<http://time.com/5190291/anxiety-depression-college-university-students/>



Dana Hashmonay, now 21, took a medical leave during her sophomore year of college after struggling with anxiety at school. Eva O'Leary for TIME

By **KATIE REILLY** March 19, 2018

Spigner is one of a rapidly growing number of college students **seeking mental health treatment** on campuses facing an unprecedented demand for counseling services. Between 2009 and 2015, the number of students visiting counseling centers increased by about 30% on average, while enrollment grew by less than 6%, the Center for Collegiate Mental Health found in a **2015 report**. Students seeking help are increasingly likely to have attempted suicide or engaged in self-harm, **the center found**. In spring 2017, nearly 40% of college students said they had felt so depressed in the prior year that it was difficult for them to function, and 61% of students said they had “felt overwhelming anxiety” in the same time period, according to an **American College Health Association survey** of more than 63,000 students at 92 schools.

(Reilly, 2018)

Theme #3: Anxiety

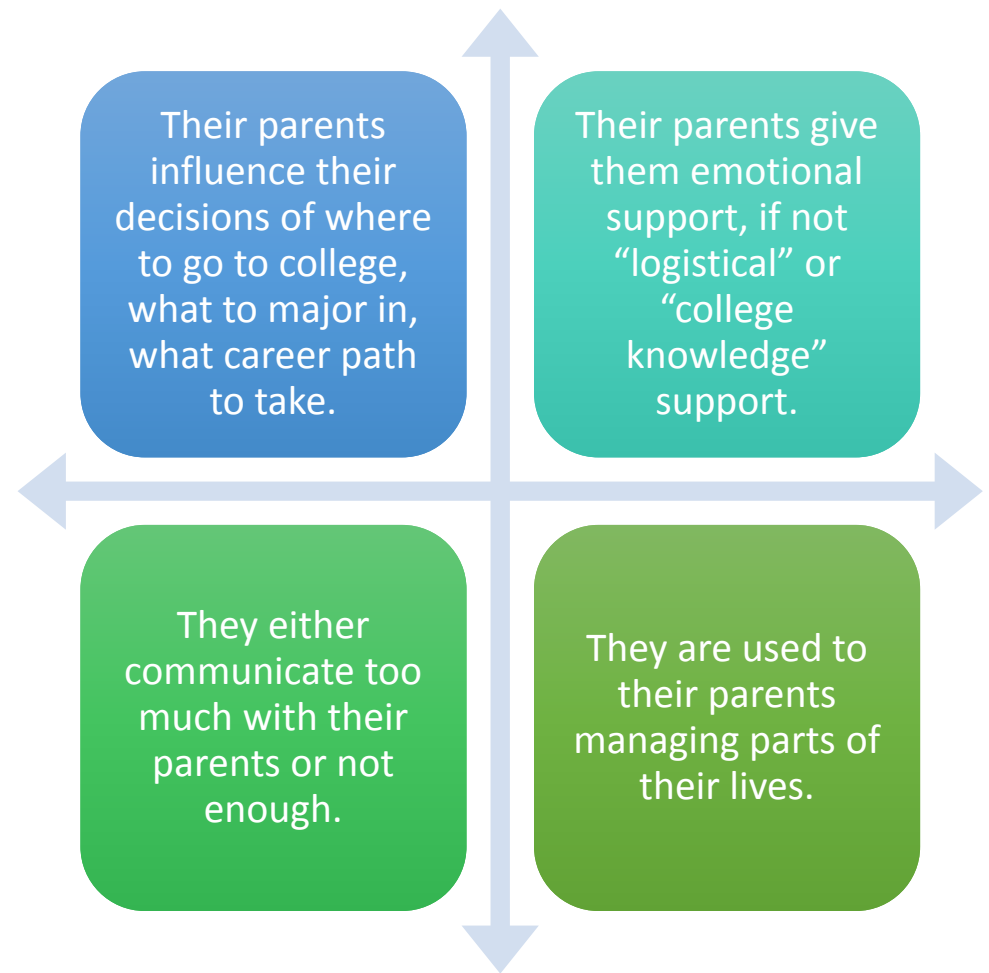
- Access to mental health counseling.
- Messages that normalize the experience and help-seeking behaviors.
- Coaching on problem-solving, if-then-consequences, and career pathways.



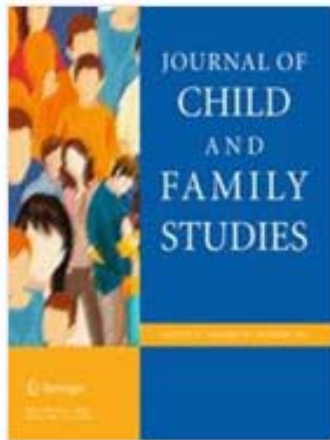


Theme #4: Parental Influence

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Researchers found that the more independent students reported higher life satisfaction. They also appeared to handle tough situations well and had better physical health. Those with hovering parents had greater difficulty handling tough tasks and decisions. They were also more likely to report anxiety and depression, as well as decreased life satisfaction and health issues.



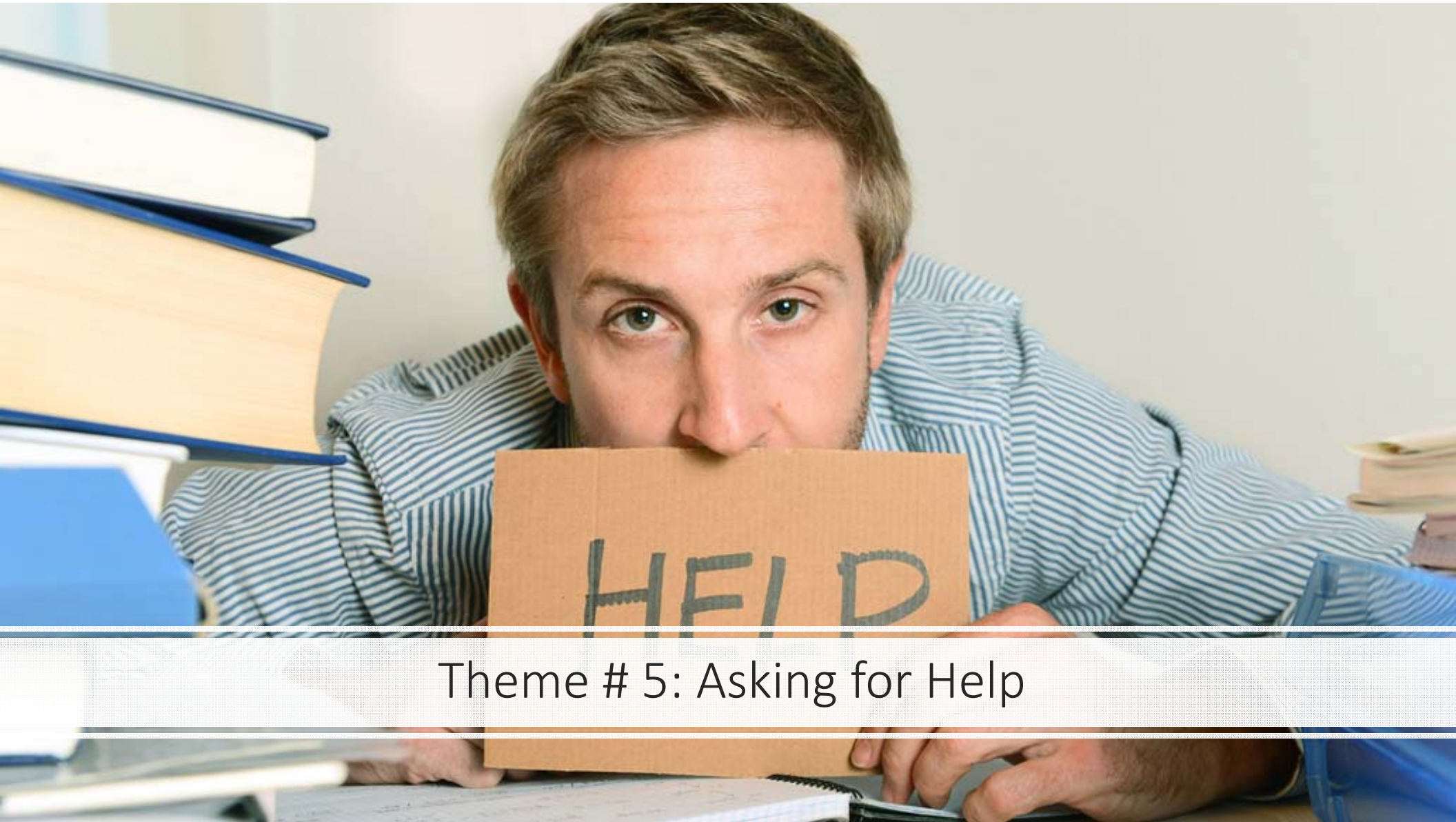
Helicopter Parenting and Emerging Adult Self-Efficacy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health

Reed, K., Duncan, J.M., Lucier-Greer, M. et al. J Child Fam Stud (2016) 25: 3136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0466-x>

Theme #4: Parental Influence

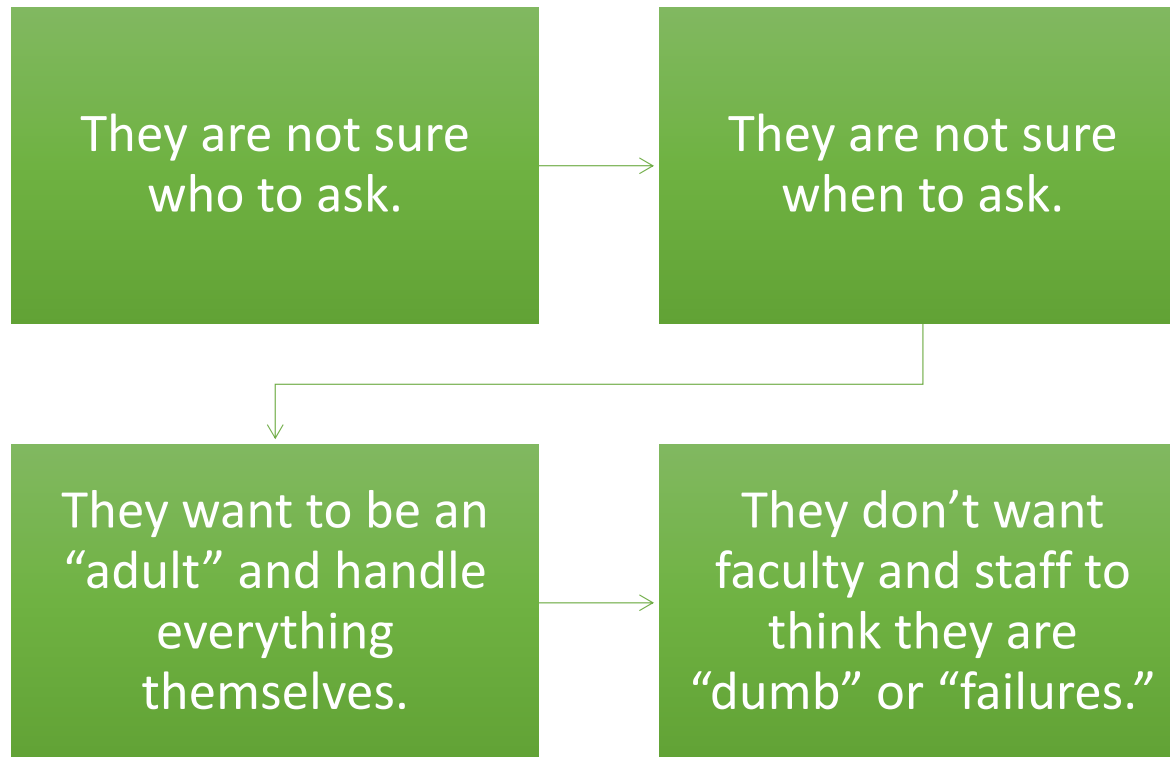
- Advisors, peer coaches, mentors who can provide logistical, college knowledge support.
- Parent communication from the institution with “partnering” messages.
- Coaching on how to communicate with their parents.





Theme # 5: Asking for Help

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Technology can be both a help and a hindrance to *asking for help*.

Today's College Students Shy Away from Face-to-Face Advising

By Dian Schaffhauser | 07/16/18

It's time for student advising to go beyond the traditional format. While 44 percent of college students would like their coaching to be one-on-one in person, according to a recent survey, more collectively would prefer other modes, including e-mailing (18 percent), online via videoconference or texting (both at 11 percent), via personalized college app (10 percent) and by social media (6 percent).



<https://campustechnology.com/articles/2018/07/16/todays-college-students-shy-away-from-face-to-face-advising.aspx>

Theme #5: Asking for Help

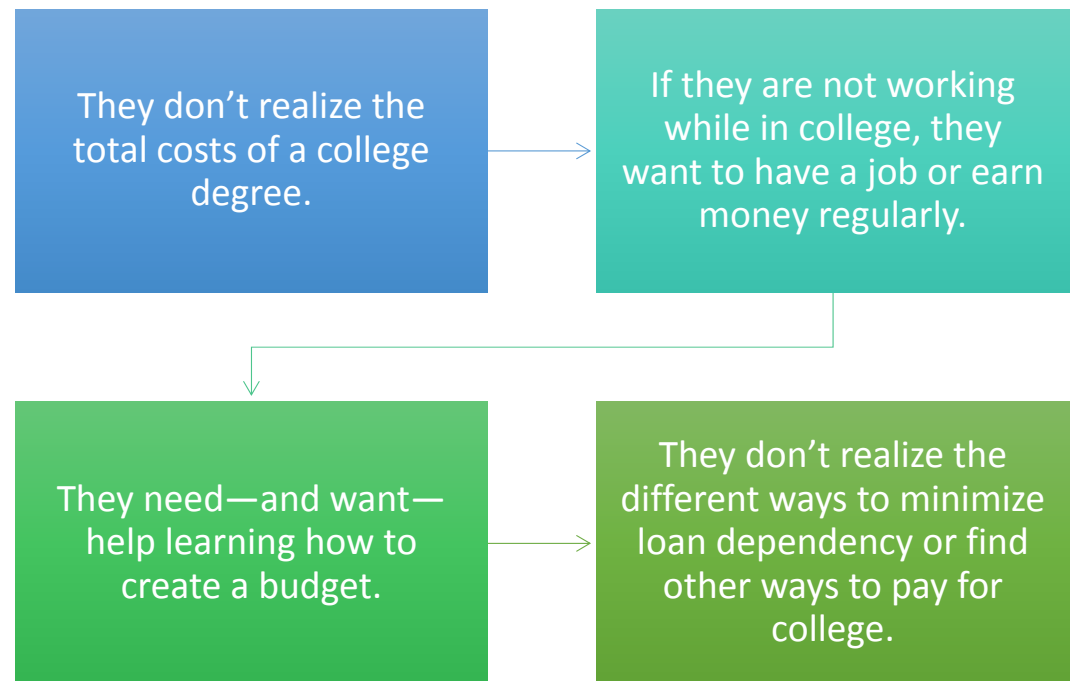
- Faculty, staff, and upperclassmen who *normalize* the help-seeking process.
- Assignments that require all students to use of support services.
- Coaching for what to say and how to say it.





Theme #6: Financial Issues

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It's 2018 and Americans are more burdened by student loan debt than ever. In fact, the average student loan debt for Class of 2017 graduates was \$39,400*, up six percent from the previous year.



Students fear
affording the costs
of college *and*
finding a good-
paying job after
graduation.

<https://studentloanhero.com/student-loan-debt-statistics/>

Theme #6: Financial Issues

- Help learning how to budget.
- More and more frequent information about the costs of college and opportunities to pay for them.
- Opportunities for part-time employment on campus.





Theme #8: Purpose-driven



Theme #7: Purpose-driven

1

They see their purpose as helping others.

2

They don't know how to connect their purpose to a major and then to a career.

3

They often focus on the *what* before clarifying the *why*.



Zach Mercurlo, Contributor

Author of "The Invisible Leader," Purpose & Meaningful Work Expert

Think Millennials Are Purpose-Driven? Meet Generation Z



The newest generation to enter the workforce, Generation Z, should be called "The Purpose Generation." In a [large study of over 2,000 respondents](#) released earlier this month, researchers found that "...for the first time, we see a generation prioritizing purpose in their work."

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/think-millennials-are-purpose-driven-meet-generation_us_5a1da9f3e4b04f26e4ba9499

Theme #7: Purpose-driven

- Opportunities to reflect on why they are in college.
- Coaching for connecting dreams and goals to educational experiences and majors.
- Co-curricular experiences and career pathways that connect to their purpose.



Theme	Subthemes	Strategies
Procrastination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task prediction • Time prediction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction on managing time and tasks
Loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making friends • Making small talk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional interactions with others
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering choices and their implications • Fear of failure/wrong choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling and coaching
Parental influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support • (Lack of) college knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional communication with parents as partners
Asking for help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing when to ask • Knowing what to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-advocacy coaching
Financial issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affording college • Affording life during and after college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required financial literacy programs
Purpose-driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering a purpose • Connecting a purpose to study and career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration that emphasizes purpose and passion



For more information

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Student success, first-generation students, first-year student issues