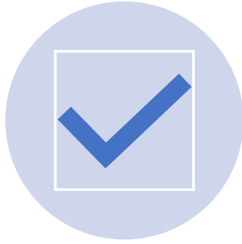




Navigating the Transition to College: How to have a successful first year of college

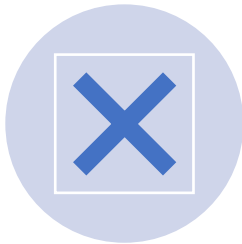
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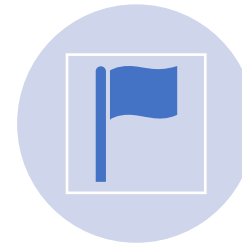
What to expect
during this
transition



Key factors of a
successful transition



Myths vs. Realities



Distinguish between
“red flags” of
difficulty and
normal adjustment
reactions



Homesickness and
what to advise



Know when to "step
in" and when to
"step back"

Why this transition matters

- An opportunity for growing intellectually and personally, creating new social connections, and establishing a sense of community within a new environment.
- Significant shift in:
 - Academics or Professional Demands
 - Social landscape
 - Independent Living
 - Orientation towards future



What can happen during this transition?

- During this transition, young adults are particularly susceptible to both **psychological and physical symptoms** of stress:
 - Loneliness
 - Depression
 - Homesickness
 - Health concerns and problematic use of substances

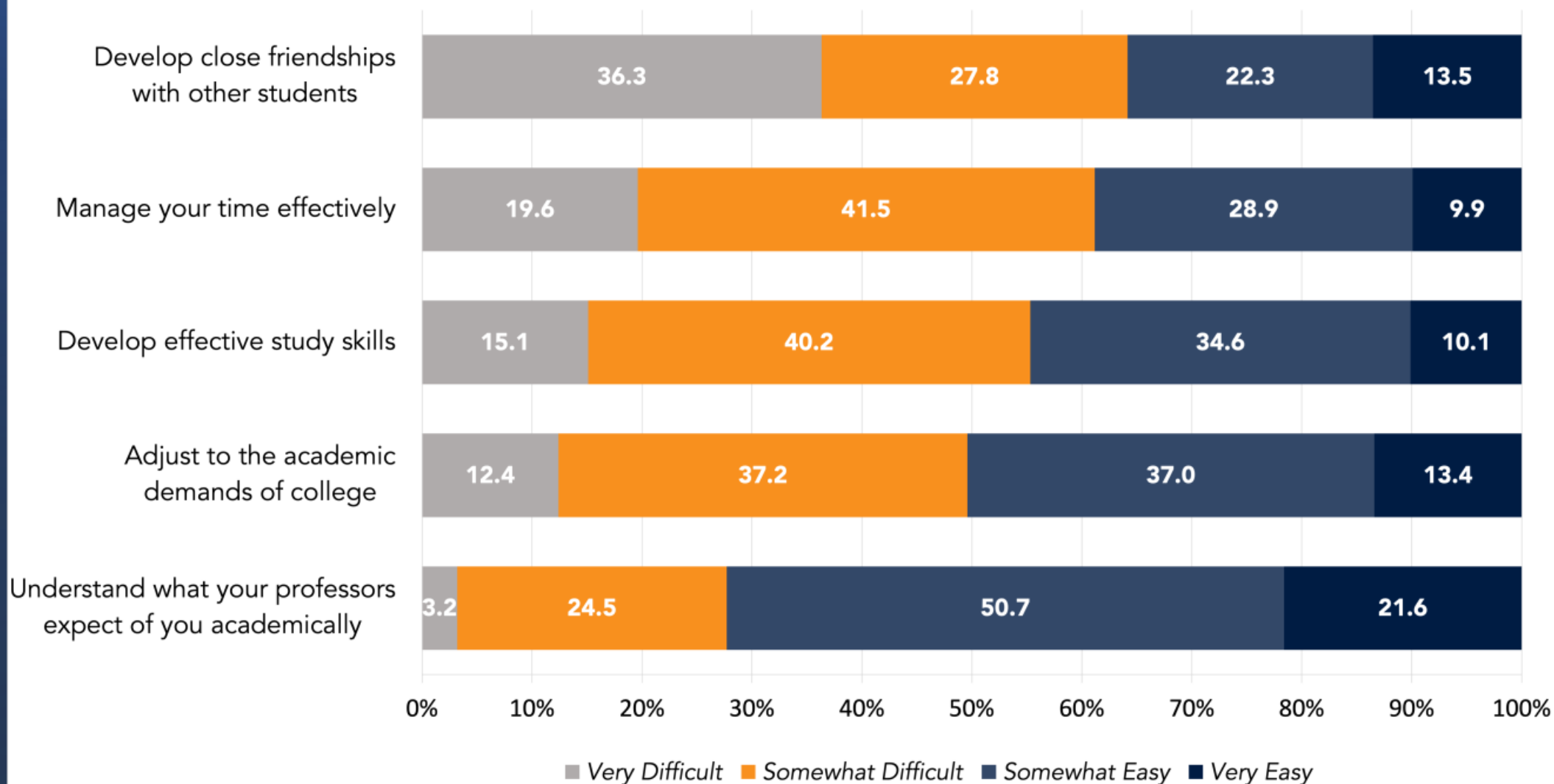
SOURCES:

Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992; Gall, Evans & Bellerose, 2000; Sadava & Pak, 1993; Scopelliti & Tiberio, 2010; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Wechsler et al., 2002

Data on the 1st Year of College

- Approximately **81.8%** felt their mental health was *at least somewhat* a source of stress.
- Approximately **74.4%** expressed that social isolation was *at least somewhat* a source of stress.
- **34.9%** (1/3) rated their emotional health as *below average/lowest 10%*; these students accounted for largest proportion who utilized psychological services on campus.
- Students had ***the most challenges*** with **developing close friendship** with peers; **64.1%** found this to be *somewhat/very difficult*.
- Nearly half (**49.6%**) found it *somewhat/very difficult* to adjust to **academic expectations**
- **Handout:** First Year in Stages

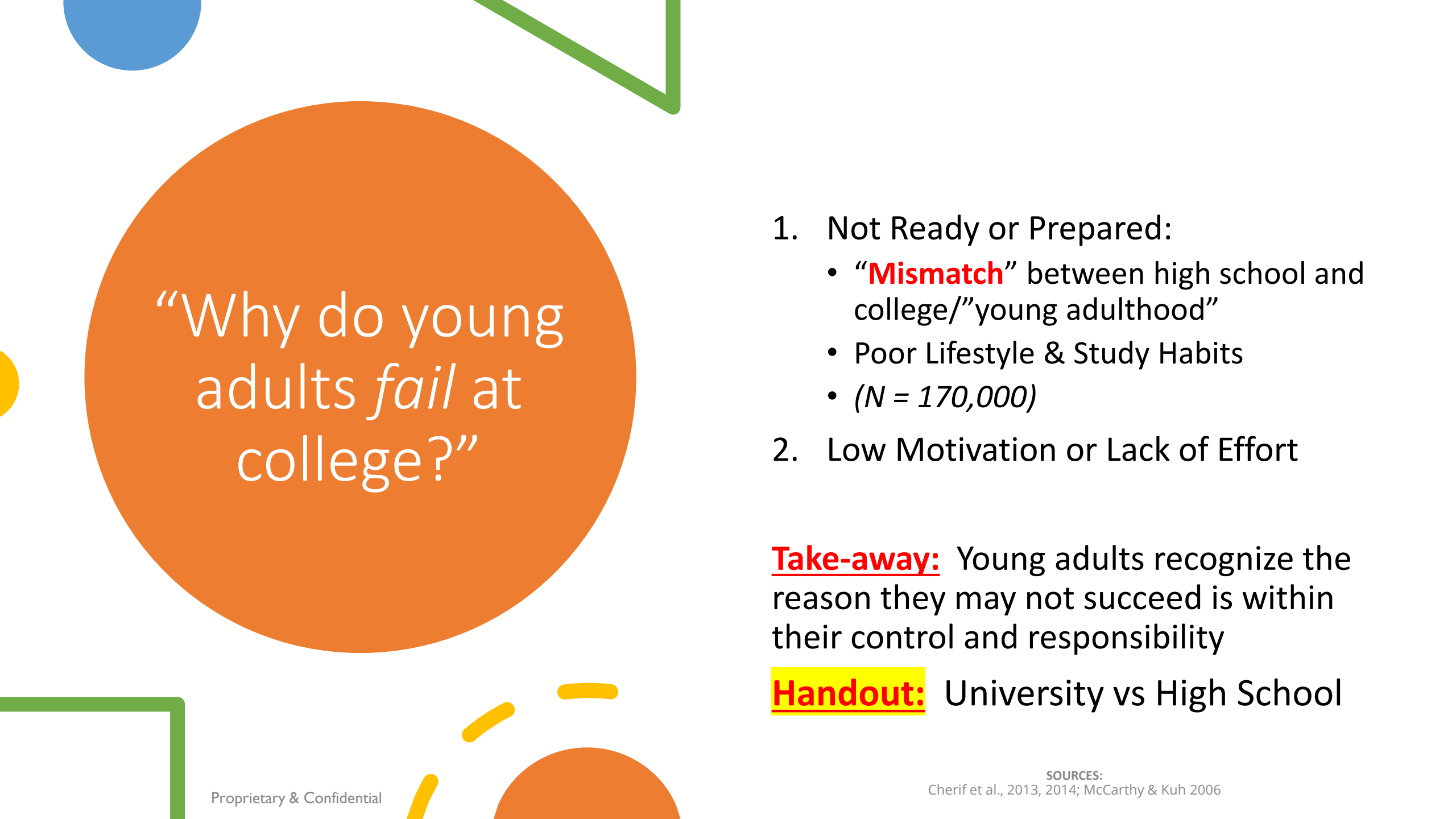
Figure 1. Ease with which students adjusted to college



What can happen during this transition?

- For Fall 2021 cohort, **67.2%** were retained at their starting institution, while **75.7%** persisted at any U.S. institution by Fall 2022 ($N = 2.4 \text{ mil}$).
- An average of **8.6%** of first-year students **transferred** to a different institution by the following fall, with full-time students more likely to transfer than part-time peers.





“Why do young adults *fail* at college?”

1. Not Ready or Prepared:
 - “**Mismatch**” between high school and college/”young adulthood”
 - Poor Lifestyle & Study Habits
 - ($N = 170,000$)
2. Low Motivation or Lack of Effort

Take-away: Young adults recognize the reason they may not succeed is within their control and responsibility

Handout: University vs High School

What do I need to succeed?

Key factors for success are:

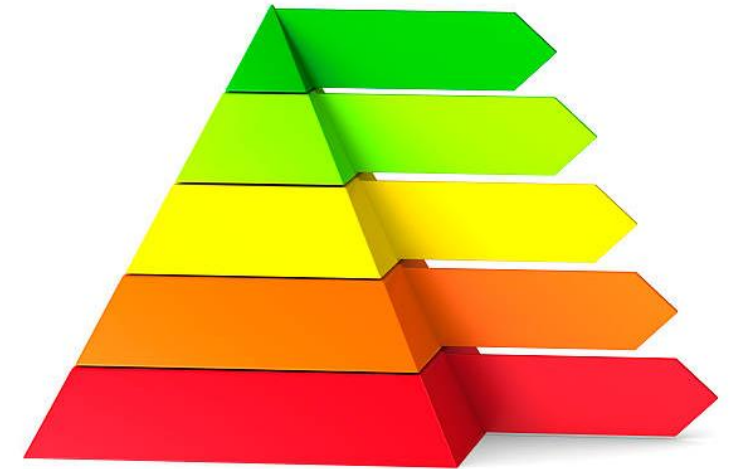
1. Balanced lifestyle for physical/emotional health
2. Time management
3. Motivation
4. Sense of Belonging



SOURCES: Brooks & DuBois, 1995; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003; Rickinson & Rutherford, 1995

Key Factors: Balance & Time Management

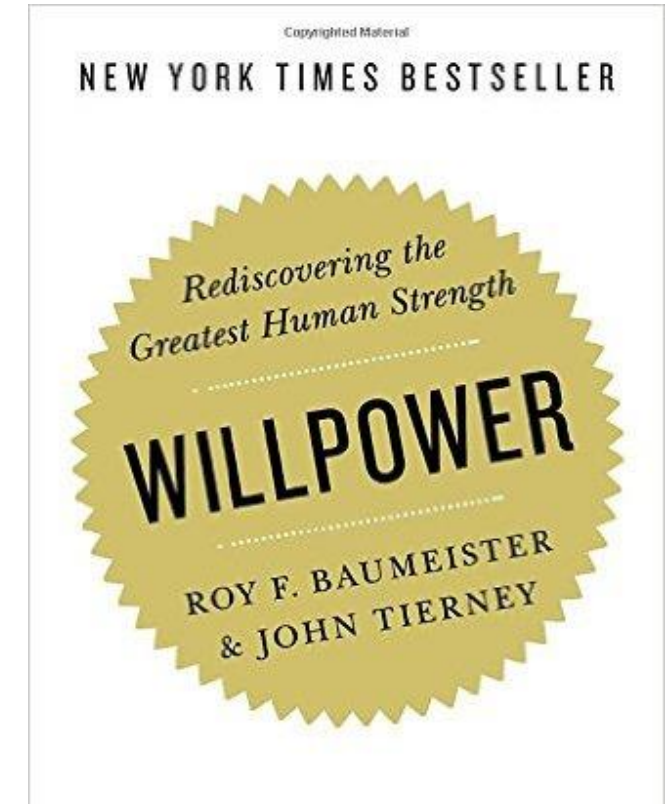
- In order of importance:
 - Physical & Emotional Health (eat, sleep, exercise)
 - Work (or being productive)
 - Social
- **Ask Your Young Adult/Yourself:**
 - When is the last time you ate/slept well?
 - When is the last time you connected with friends?
 - When is the last time you “moved”? (Small vs Large moves)
- **Handouts:** Time Management Schedule
Course Load Formulas



Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00							
8:00							
9:00		PSY 101 9:00-9:50		PSY 101 9:00-9:50		PSY 101 9:00-9:50	
10:00			CHEM 101 10:00-11:30		CHEM 101 10:00-11:30	FYE class 10:00-10:50	
11:00			↓		↓		
12:00		ENG 101 12:00-1:20		ENG 101 12:00-1:20			
1:00		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Football Game/Day Event
2:00							
3:00			CHEM 101 LAB 3:00-5:30				
4:00			↓				
5:00			↓		Dinner/Shower		
6:00	Dinner/Shower	Dinner/Shower	Dinner/Shower	Dinner/Shower	SPAN 101 6:00-8:30 pm	Dinner/Shower	
7:00	Chapter Meeting				↓		
8:00	↓				↓	Greek Social (Mixer)	
9:00						↓	
10:00	↓			(College Night)	(College Night)		
11:00				↓	↓	↓	

Key Factor: Motivation

- Your ability to self-control and motivate is **2x more predictive** of health, academic performance, income levels and relationship stability in adulthood compared to IQ and SAT scores
- Tips to increase motivation and effort:
 - Rest & Eat!
 - **Social accountability (“body double”)**
 - Consistency and structure
 - **Remember:** It’s the process, not the person
 - **Key Strategies to Learning:**
 - Distributive Practice
 - Pomodoro Method 🍅



Key Factor: Sense of Belonging



“These [early relationships] are precursors for how they will function in life socially for the rest of their lives. How well you do [with peers] tells us a whole lot about how you manage in a lot of different ways as an adult.”

SOURCES: Narr et al., 2017; Wintre et al., 2008

- The degree to which they “**fit in**” and perceive their university as a match is predictive of college success and retention
- Proximity is huge contributor to making friends
- Two essential variables: **regularity** and **familiarity**
- **Quality over Quantity:** requires one-on-one time
- Prioritize **close** friendships!
- **Paradox:** Technology/social media is surface connection (***not depth***).



TRANSITION 2 UNIVERSITY



CONNECT ► ENGAGE ► SUCCEED

Common Myths vs Reality

MYTH: “EVERYONE” Finishes “On-Time”

- For the starting cohort of 2017, **62.2%** of students had completed a bachelor’s degree by 2023 (within 6-year graduation rate; *N* = 2.4 mil).
- **51.4%** of 2017 cohort completed their bachelor’s degree within 6 years at the starting (“same”) institution.
- **22.3%** of bachelor’s degree-earners take more than four (4) years to complete their program (*Education Data Initiative, March 2024*)
- As many as **33%** to **75%** of all undergraduate students change majors at least one time before earning a degree.
- **3 out of 5** graduates would change major if they could go back (but 82% still believe good investment)

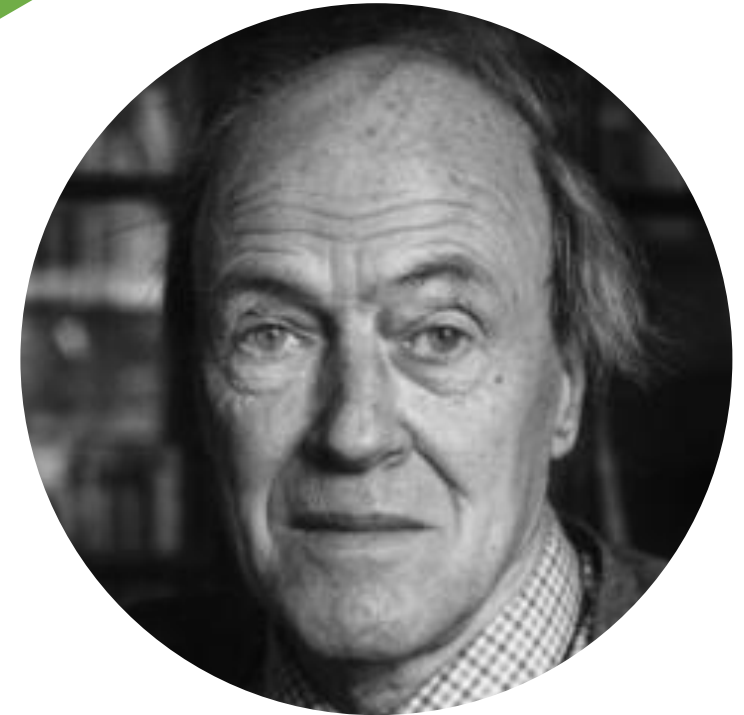


THE HECHINGER REPORT

SOURCES: Completing College National and State Reports. (Nov 2023). National Student Clearinghouse Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved [date], from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ctr>; Hanson, Melanie. “College Graduation Statistics” EducationData.org, March 15, 2024, <https://educationdata.org/number-of-college-graduates>

MYTH: “College is the happiest time of your life”

- **Over 95%** first-year students report homesickness in the first semester
- Homesickness stems from two factors:
 - #1.** a lack of security and familiarity
 - #2.** A sense of distress caused by separation.
- Most experience “homesick separation” vs “homesick distress”
- Variables that can predict, impact, or worsen homesickness, including:
 - A lack of experience with living away from home.
 - Control over the transition.
 - Attitude toward the transition.
 - Response from the family.



"Homesickness is a bit like seasickness. You don't know how awful it is until you get it, and when you do, it hits you right in the top of the stomach...."

-Roald Dahl

Early Red Flags

Communication noticeably drops (or increases)

Skipping classes or work

Having several “late nights” (or naps) in a row

Multiple requests for money

Drop in social connection

Loss of interest in pleasurable activities

Written report/early academic warning

When to Step Back vs. Step In



STEP BACK by:

Saying less and listening more

Asking clarifying questions

Validating experience

Offering support by asking “What can I do to support you?”

Anticipate residual consequences for “unloading”.

Availability as an Emotion Coach



STEP IN when you hear:

Loss of interest in activities

Lack of energy and motivation to “keep up”

Lack of interest in goals

Strategies to Support

- Validate and normalize!
 - **Tell yourself:** “This transition is very difficult and normal; it takes time but I can do this!”
- Engage in social connections; avoid isolation
 - **Ask self/young adult:** “Have I connected with.....(neighbor, former teammate, classmate)?”
- Explore and expand familiarity; get creative!
 - **Ask self/young adult:** “I miss yoga; where is the closest studio to practice?”
 - **Share with others:** “Guess what I tried recently?”

Strategies to Support

- Schedule supportive phone calls and home visits accordingly (does not mean often):
 - Once-a-week Skype/Facetime with family and even pets 😊
 - Visit home or with parents (**NOT** the first 2 weekends of college)
- Set realistic expectations
 - **Tell self/young adult:** “What can I focus/improve/work on for today?”

Strategies to Support

- If feeling **socially disconnected**:
 - Scroll through your phone/email/Facebook list of contact. Make a list of people you haven't seen or spoken to for a while. Reach out via social media and say hello! Anticipate feeling anxious or awkward, but you can do it! And it's not "weird"!
- If feeling **emotionally disconnected**:
 - Reach out to one of your social supports.
 - Try a meditation or mindfulness practice.
 - Journal and offer self-compassion
- If feeling **physically "off"**:
 - Break a sweat and raise serotonin!
 - Commit to some form of exercise (moderate walk, exercise class) for at least 30 minutes.
 - "Check in" with yourself: Hungry? Sleep-deprived? Engage in "self-care"



Resources For The Future



1. Notice 5 things that you can **see**. Look around you and become aware of your environment. Try to pick out something that you don't usually notice.
2. Notice 4 things you can **feel**. Bring attention to the things that you're currently feeling, such as the texture of your clothing or the smooth surface of the table you're resting your hands on.
3. Notice 3 things that you can **hear**. Listen for and notice things in the background that you don't normally notice. It could be the birds chirping outside or an appliance humming in the next room.
4. Notice 2 things you can **smell**. Bring attention to scents that you usually filter out, either pleasant or unpleasant. Catch a whiff of the pine trees outside or food cooking in the kitchen.
5. Notice 1 thing you can **taste**. Take a sip of a drink, chew gum, or notice the current taste in your mouth.

TED Talks
you should
check out:

- **Andy Puddicombe:** All it Takes is 10 Mindful Minutes
- **Dan Gilbert:** The Surprising Science of Happiness
- **Angela Lee Duckworth:** The Key to Success? Grit
- **Susan Cain:** The Power of Introverts
- **Matt Cutts:** Try Something New for 30 Days
- **Guy Winch: Emotional First Aid**
- **Brene Brown:** The Power of Vulnerability

Mindfulness & Meditation:

- [Insight Meditation Timer](#)
 - Variety of topics to choose from, customizable, and the ability to track your progress
- [Stop, Breathe, and Think.](#)
 - A short “interview” to identify how you feel
 - Then the app recommends guided meditations for your current state.
- [Smiling Mind](#). Designed for adolescents (Australian or British accent!)
- [Take a Break!](#) Short guided meditations for stress relief (*Work Break* or *Stress Relief*)

THANK YOU!