

Organization Tips

Create To-Do Lists

Academic success involves more than being in class and doing your homework. To be successful, you need to be organized.

Develop routines

Have a morning routine that gets your day off to a good start. Get up early enough to eat a good breakfast and not be rushed.

Before you go to bed, get everything ready for the next day. Put your backpack and anything else you will need in the same place each night. If there's something you need to remember to do in the morning, leave yourself a note.

Create a study plan

Know when you study best and create a study plan that works for you. Identify anything that could interrupt your studying and figure out how you can eliminate or avoid it.

Eliminate clutter

Throw out any papers you don't need, and put those you want to keep in a home file.

Use a monthly wall calendar

A monthly wall calendar will help you keep track of major events, project deadlines, vacations, etc.

Keep phone numbers

Have a phone number for at least one person in each class. If you miss a class or have a question, you'll then have someone to call.

Having a To-Do list allows you to focus on what you need to do, instead of wasting time worrying about how you're going to get everything done—and wondering what you've forgotten.

Each night, make a To-Do list for the next day. If you have a lot to do, prioritize the items on your list to ensure that the most important things get done.

To prioritize your tasks, rate each item on your list as an A (*must do today*), B (*should do today*), or C (*would like to do today, but it can wait*).

Rank all of the As in the order of importance (1,2,3). Do the same with the Bs and Cs.

	Wed
A	1 Study for French test
	2 Do math assignment
	3 Get TJ's birthday gift
B	1 Do outline for paper
	2 Call Jenny
C	1 Do laundry
	2 Work on lab report
	3 Get haircut

Rewrite your list with the As at the top (in the order of importance), followed by the Bs and Cs.

Focus on one task at a time, and at the end of the day, put any unfinished tasks on the next day's To-Do list.

"Don't agonize. Organize."
Florynce Kennedy



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Getting Organized

Tips and strategies to organize your stuff and your life





Use a Planner

Using a planner every day is a great way to stay organized. Use your planner to record the following information.

Important Dates

Record the beginning and ending dates of each term, exam dates, special events, and the days your school will be closed for holidays and vacations.

Daily Assignments, Quizzes, and Tests

- ▶ Write each assignment under the date it's assigned. Also write in the date it's due.
- ▶ Check assignments off once they've been completed.
- ▶ Write in all quiz and test dates.



Projects and Papers

Break large assignments down into smaller, more manageable parts. For example, if you have a paper due on Friday, you might give yourself these four assignments:

Mon – Make outline	Wed – Revise and rewrite
Tues – Write first draft	Thurs – Write final draft

Be sure to write these smaller assignments in your planner also.

Activities and Appointments

Write in practices, appointments, social activities, and anything else you need to remember.

Organize Your Stuff



Keeping your stuff organized will save you time and lots of aggravation.

Organize your study area

When you're organized you have the tools you need when you need them. Equip and organize your study area with paper, pencils, pens, calculator, paper clips, ruler, stapler, highlighters, etc.

Keep your notes and handouts organized

Three-ring notebooks work well because you can easily insert handouts, and if you're absent, you can copy a classmate's notes and insert them where they belong. (If you keep a 3-hole punch in your notebook, you can put handouts in with your notes as soon as you get them.)

Your notes and class handouts are your most valuable test prep resources. It is, therefore, very important that you create a system for keeping these organized.

Organize and save computer work

Make sure you save your work often. Regularly back up, clean up, and organize your computer files.

Getting Organized

- ▶ Do you waste time looking for things?
- ▶ Do you often forget to bring what you need to class?
- ▶ Are there loose papers in your notebook?
- ▶ Do you finish assignments at the last minute?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your organization skills.

Being organized makes your day run smoother and it saves you time. When you're organized, you also have less stress, and you feel more in control of your life.

Being organized isn't hard; however, it's a skill that needs to be developed and practiced. The tips in this InfoGuide will help you get started.

Being organized will not only make you a better student, it will help you succeed in your career, and in life.

Study Tips

Vary Your Studying

Use these tips to help you stay on track and make the most of your study time.

- ▶ Have a phone number for at least one person in each class. If you miss a class or have a question, you'll have someone to call.
- ▶ Complete written assignments early. This gives you time to improve your work.
- ▶ If you listen to music while you're doing homework, try listening to classical music.
- ▶ MS Word is the standard in word processing. Familiarity with Word's shortcuts and features will save you countless hours.
- ▶ Sometimes it's helpful to study with other students. But only study with students who are serious about their schoolwork, and keep study sessions focused and on track.
- ▶ If there's something you don't understand, ask for clarification. If you're struggling in a class, don't wait. Get help.
- ▶ The key to learning anything is REVIEW. When you review, you move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. *Review often!*

Using study strategies that engage multiple senses (visual, auditory, and tactile) can make your study time more effective and less tedious.

- ▶ Put important information on flashcards or create a PowerPoint with colors and pictures. Creating these will not only help you learn and remember the material—you'll have great study tools for later.
- ▶ Alternate types of work. For example: 1) read biology, 2) do math, 3) read history.
- ▶ When thinking about a paper you need to write, or trying to figure out how various ideas connect to each other, try mapping the concepts. Make a flow chart or diagram and use arrows and lines to connect the different ideas.
- ▶ Record yourself reading material out loud and listen to these recordings while taking a walk or doing chores.
- ▶ Study in a new place. Go to a public library or coffee shop, or find a quiet outdoor space.

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out." Robert Collier



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Studying Smart

Tips and strategies to help you get the most out of your study time





Know When, Where, and How to Study

Organize Your Study Time

Studying Smart

- ▶ Does your homework seem to take longer than it should?
- ▶ Do you have a hard time staying focused when you study?
- ▶ Do large assignments sometimes seem overwhelming?
- ▶ Are your grades lower than they should be?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your study habits.

The key to success is not studying a lot—it's studying smart.

Students who "study smart" often spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades. They know how to make the most of their study time, and they get help when they need it.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle

The time, the place, and your focus play a big part in how productive your study time is.

Have a good place to study

Your study area should be quiet, comfortable, well-lit, and have a surface for writing. Equip your study area with the tools you need (e.g., paper, pencils, pens, calculator, stapler, highlighters).

Eliminate distractions

Turn off the TV and *silence your phone*. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only—study.



Be smart about when you study

Some students study best at night. Others prefer studying earlier in the day. Try to plan your day so that you study when you're the most alert.

While it's best to have a regular time to study, many students have activities, jobs, or other responsibilities they must work around. At the end of each school day, think about the time you have available, the amount of work you have to do, and make a plan.

Get started

Don't procrastinate or wait until you're "in the mood." Set a time to start studying and stick to it. If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or a subject you like.



Organizing your work will help you make the most efficient use of your time.

Create a study plan

- ▶ Before you begin studying, decide exactly what you want to get done and the order in which you are going to do it. Be specific. For example: 1) do lab report, 2) read history pages 51-70, 3) revise English paper.
- ▶ If you have a lot to do, prioritize your work. Start with the things that are the most important.
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on it first, and then go over it again at the end of your study session.

Break large assignments down

Use a planner to break large assignments down into smaller, more manageable parts. For example:

Mon – Create outline Wed – Revise and rewrite
Tues – Write first draft Thurs – Write final report

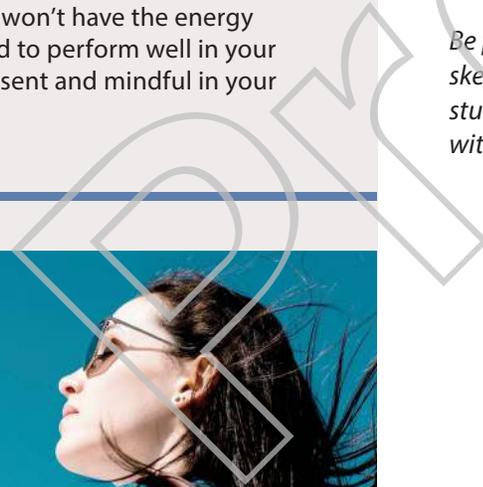
Take breaks

After studying for 30 minutes, take a short break. Get a snack or get up and stretch. Resist the temptation to text a friend, go online, or check your messages. Save those things for later.

Manage Stress

It's difficult to be mindful or present when you're stressed out. And being a teenager today can certainly be stressful at times.

- ▶ When you're feeling stressed out, take good care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, eat right, and get some exercise. (Physical activity can actually reduce stress.) Also, do whatever helps you feel calm and relaxed (e.g., take a walk, go someplace quiet, take a hot bath, read a book, play with a pet).
- ▶ If you are feeling overwhelmed and think you may have taken on too much, make a list of everything going on in your life and determine what can be changed, put off until later, or dropped.
- ▶ When you're feeling stressed, confide in others—friends, family, your school counselor, spiritual leaders. It's much healthier to share your problems than it is to go it alone.
- ▶ Make sure you have time in your day to relax and rejuvenate. If you don't have time for rest and relaxation, you won't have the energy and stamina needed to perform well in your classes, or to be present and mindful in your daily activities.



Relax and Meditate

Try these mindfulness strategies whenever you have a few extra minutes.

Deep Breathing

Find a comfortable place to sit, close your eyes, and relax your body. Breathe in deeply, and slowly count to four. On four, slowly release your breath. Then repeat. *Deep breathing is incredibly effective in helping you feel calm and relaxed.*

Visualization

Close your eyes. Imagine a relaxing scene, adding as many details as you can. Even better, pair your visualization with deep breathing.

Guided Meditation

Meditation enhances relaxation and improves focus, which are key components of mindfulness. With guided meditation, a voice walks you through the meditation process by helping you relax your body and focus your thoughts. Guided meditation is easy to find in online streaming services like Spotify, Google Play, or iTunes. You can also use an app like Meditation Studio or Calm.

Be positive and open-minded, even if you're skeptical about this meditation and mindfulness stuff. Anything that will help you relax and deal with stress is worth a try.



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Being Mindful

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Being Mindful

Information and tips to help you stay focused and manage stress





Be Present

Know Yourself

Being Mindful

- ▶ Do you often have a hard time concentrating?
- ▶ Does your mind frequently wander in class? While you're studying? Even when you're talking to someone else?
- ▶ Do you wish you could be more focused and present in class and with others?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, you might benefit from learning some mindfulness techniques.

Mindfulness is simply making the effort to notice things that you wouldn't normally pay attention to. When you aren't mindful, you're basically on auto-pilot—and when you're on auto-pilot, you're more distracted and less focused.

Being distracted and unfocused can make succeeding in school difficult, frustrating, and stressful.

Read on to learn how to be more mindful, improve your focus and attention, and as a result, become a better student.



Being present means turning off auto-pilot and focusing on what you are doing and experiencing now.

To be more present in class...

- ▶ Come to class well-rested, alert, and ready to learn.
- ▶ Leave all of your concerns and problems at the door. (You can "pick them back up" after class.)
- ▶ Be aware of your thoughts. If your mind starts to wander, notice it, and refocus on the class.
- ▶ Remind yourself that when you learn as much as you can in class, you have less to learn on your own.

Train your brain

Practice targeting your attention. For example, when you're walking to class, pay attention to things you wouldn't normally notice, like the sounds you hear, what the hallway looks like, and what other students are doing.

Being mindful is something you get better at with practice. Remind yourself to be "in the now" and to be fully present—throughout the day, in and out of class, with others, and alone.

Being mindful isn't just paying attention to what's going on around you. Paying attention to yourself and how you feel is also important.

Know (and stretch) your limits

Everyone's attention span is limited. This limit often varies from situation to situation, and from subject to subject. For example, you may be able to do math problems for a long period of time, but struggle to stay focused for more than a few minutes when reading a history assignment.

Pay attention to how long you can do something (e.g., work on a paper, read a textbook) before you get the itch to take a break or pull out your phone. Then try to extend the time you can work on that subject/project, before you give in to that itch.

Know what works (and what doesn't)

Just because you've always done something a certain way doesn't mean it's the best way. For example, you may have always waited until after dinner to do your homework, but that doesn't mean it's the most ideal time for you to study.

To determine what works best for you, pay attention to how you feel, and to the results of your efforts.

Are you tired when you study after dinner? Are you distracted when you study in your bedroom? Is the way you study boring or ineffective? If so, make a change! Try something different.



Successful students use tips such as these to manage their time.

- ▶ **Use free time in school wisely.** You'll have a lot less work to do at night.
- ▶ **Look for chunks of time during the day that are wasted.** Think about how you can use these times more effectively. For example, review your notes while waiting for a ride.
- ▶ **Create routines.** A good morning and nighttime routine will save you time, and help your day run more smoothly.
- ▶ **Learn to say "no."** Don't let anything get in the way of your schoolwork.
- ▶ **Don't give up sleep to get everything done.** If you're doing more than you can handle, look for activities that can be eliminated or postponed.
- ▶ **Control time wasters.** Social media, TV, and video games can all be huge time wasters. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities, and stick to your schedule.
- ▶ **Set aside time to relax.** It's important to take time to relax and recharge your batteries.

List four of your favorite activities.

Favorite Activities	1	2	3
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

After you've written in your favorite activities, do the following for each:

In column 1 – write an **A** if it's an activity that you primarily do alone. Write an **F** if it's an activity mostly done with friends or others.

In column 2 – write an **M** if it's an activity that involves movement or action. Write an **S** if it's a sedentary activity requiring little movement.

In column 3 – write an **I** if it's an activity that's generally done inside. Write an **O** if it's an activity mostly done outside.

What do the results show about how you spend your time?

Do you have a good balance between doing things alone and with friends, between doing things inside and outside, and between activities that are sedentary and active? Should you make any changes to how you spend your free time?

Managing Your Time

Tips and strategies to help you use the time you have wisely



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Managing Your Time

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Time Management Tips



With good time management, you have less stress and more free time. You also feel more in control of your life.

Managing Your Time

- ▶ Do you often feel like you have too much to do?
- ▶ Do you typically finish assignments at the last minute?
- ▶ Are you often late to school, practices, and appointments?
- ▶ Do you wish you had more time for the things you want to do?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your time management skills.

We all have the same amount of time: 24 hours a day/ 168 hours a week. How we use our time is time management.

When you use your time wisely, you have time for the things you need to do, and you still have time for the things you want to do.

"Time is the most precious element of human existence." Denis Waitley

Make To-Do lists

1. Each day make a list of all the things you need to do.
2. Rate each item as an A (must do today), B (should do today), or C (want to do today, but it can wait).
3. Take all of the As and rank them in order of importance (1, 2, 3...). Do the same with the Bs and Cs.
4. Rewrite your list with the As at the top (in order of importance), followed by the Bs and Cs.
5. Cross things off as they get done. At the end of each day, take the tasks that didn't get done and put them on the next day's To-Do list.

Wed	
A	1 Study for French test 2 Do math assignment 3 Get TJ's birthday gift
B	1 Do outline for paper 2 Call Jenny
C	1 Do laundry 2 Work on lab report 3 Get haircut



Stay organized

Being organized is a huge time saver.

- ▶ Get everything ready for the next day before you go to bed.
- ▶ Use a planner to keep track of assignments, tests, and appointments.
- ▶ Use a wall calendar for major events and project deadlines.



Make a weekly schedule

Using a schedule like the one below will help you organize your time after school.

First write in all appointments, practices, chores, and meal times. You will then be able to see when you have blocks of time for homework and studying—and when you have time for relaxation and social activities.

Week of: _____	Weekly Schedule			
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Th
3:00 pm				
4:00 pm				
5:00 pm				
6:00 pm				
7:00 pm				
8:00 pm				
9:00 pm				
10:00 pm				

Each Sunday night, take time to plan out the coming week. Make sure that you have enough time to do everything that's scheduled.

Motivational Tips

Don't Give Up

These motivational tips will help you stay engaged and ready for a challenge.

Use motivating “self-notes”

Write motivating words, ideas, and/or quotes on sticky notes. Put these notes anywhere you're likely to see them.

Visualize success

For example, before the day of a test, close your eyes and imagine yourself confidently walking into the classroom and answering the questions correctly. *Imagining a scene like this is called visualization.* This is a technique used by students, athletes, and leaders around the world.

Turn failures into successes

When something doesn't go well, learn from the experience, and use that knowledge to do better next time.

Hit refresh

When you're feeling overwhelmed, take a break. Listen to music, take a walk, or talk to a friend—then return ready to tackle your work.

Figure out what motivates you

Turn what competes with your schoolwork into a motivator. For example, reward yourself with social media or video game time once your homework is done.

Most successful people have faced failure at some point in their lives, but like the people below, they found the motivation to keep going—they refused to give up.

Michael Jordan was cut from the high school varsity basketball team his sophomore year.

Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor because he had “no good ideas.”

JK Rowling received rejections from 12 publishers before her first “Harry Potter” book was accepted for publication.

Raised in extreme poverty, Oprah Winfrey didn't own a pair of shoes until she was six. She is now a billionaire.

Thomas Edison once had a teacher who told him that he was too stupid to learn anything.

Steven Spielberg, an Academy Award winning director, was rejected by USC's film school three times.

Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade.

“If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves.”

Thomas Edison



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Staying Motivated

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Staying Motivated

Information and tips to help you stay confident and engaged





Staying Motivated

- ▶ Do you give up on schoolwork too easily?
- ▶ Do you think negative thoughts about school, yourself, and your abilities?
- ▶ Are you frustrated in your classes or unhappy with your grades?
- ▶ Would you like to feel more confident in yourself or more optimistic about your future?

If you answered yes to any of the above, it's important that you find ways to feel more confident in your abilities and more motivated in your classes.

We all get stuck sometimes. So how do you keep yourself going when you're feeling stressed out, discouraged, or overwhelmed? *You need to work to keep a positive attitude and find ways to stay motivated.*

This InfoGuide will provide you with lots of tips on how you can keep moving forward and stay positive—so that you can be successful in whatever you do.

Have a Positive Attitude

A positive attitude will get you far in life. Here are some tips for staying positive, even when the going gets tough.

Surround yourself with positive people

In life, we come across all kinds of people. Some are positive influences in our lives and some are not. Try to stay away from people who are negative or critical. Instead, choose to be around people who support and encourage you. These are the people who will help you achieve your goals and realize your dreams.



Believe in yourself

Have you ever heard a coach talk to a team before a game? In pregame speeches, coaches try to energize their players and make them believe they can win. This is because coaches know that people have a greater chance of succeeding if they believe in themselves.

Whether you're an athlete preparing for competition or a student tackling a difficult subject, it's important that you recognize the talents and abilities you have, and believe that you can succeed!

Move with positive energy

Stand tall, walk with confidence and purpose, and smile. *If you act positive, you just may find that you feel more positive.*

Plan for Success

Having goals you want to achieve and focusing on the positive will help you stay motivated—and be successful, both in and out of the classroom.

Set goals

Goals give you direction. They help you decide where you want to go and what you need to do. Have a list of both short-term goals (e.g., get a B on Monday's Biology test) and long-term goals (e.g., graduate with a 3.0 GPA).

"People with goals succeed because they know where they are going." Earl Nightingale

Focus on your strengths

You are a unique individual with many interests, talents, strengths, and weaknesses. While it's good to work on your shortcomings and weaknesses, your strengths are where your future lies. Look for ways to pursue your interests, and to develop your talents and strengths.



Use positive "self talk"

We all have a voice inside our head, and when things aren't going well, that voice can be negative and critical. You can help yourself stay positive and motivated just by changing your "self talk."

Replace *"I'm terrible at math"* with *"I'm smart – I can do this."* Changing how you think will change how you feel, and how you act.

So many others...

If you look around your school, you'll find teachers, principals, counselors, librarians, tutors, coaches, social workers, and secretaries. All of these people are there to help you have the best school year possible.

Look for people in your school who support you, and who you feel comfortable talking to. Whether it's a teacher, counselor, coach, or cafeteria worker, find at least one adult in your school you can develop a bond with—and can talk to when you have a problem.

We all need to know that we have people "in our corner." And the more, the better!

The person who can help you the most...

The person who can help you the most with any problem, issue, or concern is a parent. If you're having a problem with a class, teacher, another student, or something else, tell a parent right away.

Start the conversation by letting your parent know what you need. Do you want advice, support, or just someone to listen?

If you don't feel you can talk to a parent, talk to another adult you trust.



Other Resources

Help is available everywhere. It can be a call, text, or click away.

- ▶ **Al-Anon.org** can connect you with resources if a parent or family member is an alcoholic.
- ▶ **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 1-800-273-8255 or chat online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- ▶ **Crisis Text Line:** Text "START" to 741741 or call 1-800-273-TALK
- ▶ **Anti-Violence Project:** Call 212-714-1141 or visit avp.org.
- ▶ **National Eating Disorders Association Helpline:** Text "NEDA" to 741-741 or call 1-800-931-2237
- ▶ **National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens:** Call 1-800-662-HELP
- ▶ **iheartmob.org** can help you if you are being cyberbullied.
- ▶ **Activeminds.org** can help you connect with a mental health professional in your area.

If you're struggling with something, no matter what it is, you don't have to go through it alone. There is always someone to help.



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Reaching Out for Help
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Reaching Out for Help

Tips, advice, and encouragement to get the help you need



Academic Help

Your Counselor



Reaching Out for Help

- ▶ Are you worried about your grades?
- ▶ Do you sometimes need help, but are too shy or afraid to ask for it?
- ▶ Do you need help figuring out what to do after you graduate, or need help with a personal problem?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, now is the time to get the help you need.

There are many people in your life who want to see you succeed, but ultimately, your success is your responsibility. It's up to you to reach out for help when you need it.

Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness; it's a sign of maturity and a desire to succeed.

"You are never so strong that you don't need help." Cesar Chavez

If you're struggling in a class, your teacher should be your first point of contact.

Talk to your teacher

Teachers usually know if you're having trouble in their class, but they may or may not approach you to see what's going on, or to offer extra help. Asking for help is your responsibility.

If you're struggling in a class, talk to your teacher before or after class to schedule a time to meet—and tell your teacher what you want to talk about (e.g., go over the results of a test, ask for help with an assignment, inquire about earning extra credit).



If you are struggling and feel you need a tutor, ask your teacher for advice on how you can get some extra help. Perhaps there is a teacher or another student who can tutor you after school or during a study hall. The important thing is to not wait. Ask for help at the earliest sign you need it.

If you need help with a specific task, such as how to solve a math problem or make a PowerPoint presentation, there's often a YouTube video that can provide you with the information you need.

Your school counselor is there to help you succeed both in and out of the classroom.

School counselors are very busy and often don't have time to just check in with their students to see how they're doing. This is why it's so important for you to let your counselor know when you need help, want information, or just need someone to listen.

Here are just some of the reasons you may want to make an appointment to see your counselor:

- ▶ you need help deciding which classes to take.
- ▶ you're being bullied or harassed in school or online.
- ▶ you're having a problem with friends, a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- ▶ you are struggling in one or more of your classes.
- ▶ you need help figuring out what to do after you graduate.
- ▶ you have questions about college.
- ▶ you are dealing with something that's making it difficult to succeed in your classes (e.g., drugs or alcohol, a pregnancy, anxiety, a health concern, stress, problems at home).



Have a question? Need information? Have a concern or problem? Reach out to your counselor!