

Surviving the Slump

Sonja A. Foster, MA, MS
Instructor/Faculty Advisor
School of Family and Consumer Sciences
Eastern Illinois University

The Sophomore Slump

“Tendency of students to do worse academically in their second year of higher education; difficulties in social, personal and career development”

- Feldman & Newcomb (1969)

“time of dissatisfaction with college and self”

Does this just happen during the “Sophomore” year?



The Slump and Retention Rates

How does The Slump affect retention and graduation rates?

[EIU Retention and Graduation Rates](#)

[2011 Complete College State Data](#)

Contributing Factors

- Student to Major Mismatch
- “Newness” of college has worn off
- Homesickness, Change in Relationships
- Lack of focus
- Lack of Maturity
- Mistrust of Faculty/Staff and/or Institution
- Family Issues
- Emotional Issues
- Returning to school – (e.g. adult learners, veterans)
- Feeling “caught” between two worlds
-

Symptoms of the Slump

- Decrease in academic performance
- Feelings of hopelessness, depression, etc.
- Withdrawn from social activities
- **Other Symptoms?**



Advising and the Slump

Advising styles based on student developmental levels:

- Traditional/Prescriptive Advising
- Developmental Advising
- Intrusive Advising
- Appreciative Advising - [Six Phases of Appreciative Advising](#)
- Strength Based Advising
- Social Constructivism in Advising
- Chickering's Seven Vectors
- **Others?**

What advising style(s) work best for students experiencing The Slump? Why? What approach do you take?

Source: Williams, S. (2007). From Theory to Practice: The Application of Theories of Development to Academic Advising Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* Web site:
<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Applying-Theory-to-Advising-Practice.aspx>

Theory to Practice: Family Stress Theory

- Began at University of Michigan and University of Chicago (1930's) during upheaval of Depression
 - Research on how families deal with stress of unemployment/loss of income
 - *Integration and Adaptability*
- Reuben Hill – “Father of Family Stress Research”
 - 1st to conceptualize family stress theory
 - “Roller Coaster Profile of Adjustment”
 - Developed ABC-X model of family stress

Family Stress Theory

Hill's ABC-X Model

- A – stressor event
- B – family resources
- C – family perception of stressor event
- X – crisis

McCubbin & Patterson's Double ABC-X Model

- Aa – Pileup
- Bb – Existing & New Family Resources
- Cc – Perception of Aa & Bb & X
- Xx – Adaptation (Bonadaptation or Maladaptation)

•

•

Theory to Practice

Case Study - Adapted from [PsyWeb Case Studies](#)

- Martin is a 21 year-old business major at a large university. Over the past few weeks his family, friends, teachers and advisor have noticed increasingly bizarre behaviors. On many occasions they've overheard him whispering in an agitated voice, even though there is no one nearby. Martin's participation in class and quality of work has suffered greatly from one semester to the next. He is now so far behind in his coursework that he will fail if something doesn't change very soon.
- Lately, he has refused to go to class, his advising appointments, and answer or make calls on his cell phone, claiming that if he does it will activate a deadly chip that was implanted in his brain by evil aliens.
- His parents and academic advisor have tried to get him to go to a psychiatrist for an evaluation, but he refuses. He has accused them on several occasions of conspiring with the aliens to have him killed so they can remove his brain and put it inside one of their own.
- Although Martin occasionally has a few beers with his friends, he's never been known to abuse alcohol or use drugs. He does, however, have an estranged aunt who has been in and out of psychiatric hospitals over the years due to erratic and bizarre behavior.

Campus and Community Resources

- Health and Wellness
- Involvement in Organizations
- Career Services
- Academic/Personal Advising
- **Other Campus/Community Resources?**
-

Ways Advisors Can Help Students Survive the Slump:

- Be knowledgeable of campus and community resources to help students
- Cultural Competence
- Connection with Career Services
- Strengthen the Advisor as a Mentor role?
- Consider establishing more “intrusive advising” between students and department and faculty advisors
- **Other Ways?**



Final Questions, Comments or Thoughts?

Thank you for coming!

Sonja A. Foster

safoster@eiu.edu

217-581-6356

References

Chickering, A. (n.d) "The Seven Vectors: An Overview." Retrieved from:

<https://www.cabrini.edu/communications/ProfDev/cardevChickering.html>

Complete College America (2011). College Completion Data. Retrieved from:

<http://completecollege.org/college-completion-data/>

Foster, S. (2014). Family Stress Theory – Powerpoint. FCS 4845, The Family in Crisis. Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois.

Williams, S. (2007). From Theory to Practice: The Application of Theories of Development to Academic Advising Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* Web site:

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Applying-Theory-to-Advising-Practice.aspx>