

**Family Newsletter**

December 2014

Factors which may affect how your body metabolizes the caffeine include your size, age, sex, hydration levels, drug interactions, and how much food is in your stomach. Different people can tolerate varying levels of caffeine. As parents you should be aware of how many energy drinks your children are consuming at one time. Often your student will slam more than one drink if they are getting ready for a hardcore workout, game practice, or a night of dancing, according to Cody Lyon on [www.upwave.com](http://www.upwave.com)

For comparison purposes, here are some examples taken from [www.healthline.com/health/caffeine-overdose#Overview1](http://www.healthline.com/health/caffeine-overdose#Overview1)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Serving Size** | **Caffeine (mg)** |
| Coffee | 8oz. | 133 |
| Black Tea | 8oz. | 53 |
| Cola | 12oz. | 35 |
| Red Bull | 8.3oz. | 80 |
| Dark Chocolate Bar | 1.45oz. | 33 |
| NoDoz Caffeine Tablet | 1 tablet | 200 |
| Extra Strength Excedrin | 1 table | 65 |

If your child is exhibiting the symptoms above, it might be worth asking them if they have consumed more caffeine than they should have, or ask if they have ingested caffeine powder. It is possible they might need to be given activated charcoal, a common remedy for a drug overdose. They might need to have their stomach pumped or have their heart monitored via an EKG. If you suspect your student might be poisoned, you can always call Poison Control at

1-800-222-1222.

**The Harmful Effects of Caffeine**

On May 27, 2014 Ohio prom king Logan Stiner, age 18, died from a caffeine overdose. The Lorain County Coroner stated that Logan died from an irregular heartbeat and seizures after ingesting caffeine powder. [www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/07/01/caffeine-overdose-prom-king/11863631](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/07/01/caffeine-overdose-prom-king/11863631) This article goes on to say that you can only buy caffeine powder on the internet, because it is so strong. For example, one teaspoon of the powder contains up to 1600 milligrams of caffeine. This equates to about 70 cans of Red Bull. The companies that sell this caffeine powder often claim that it improves focus, increases endurance and elevates your mood.

In addition to being chosen as the Prom King, Logan was also a wrestler at Keystone High School. Dr. Steven Evans, the Coroner, found more than 70 micrograms of caffeine per milliliter of blood, which is far more than the 3 to 13 micrograms found in coffee. A small bag of caffeine powder was found in Logan’s house. <http://chronicle.northcoastnow.com/2014/07/19/local-death-caffeine-overdose-fda-issues-warning/>

This same article quotes the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as saying that caffeine powder is marketed as a dietary supplement, therefore it isn’t regulated by them. FDA spokeswoman Jennifer Dooren said that those who drink coffee, tea or soda may be aware of caffeine’s less-serious effects, like nervousness and tremors, and might not realize that the powdered form is a pure chemical. She continues to say that the products may carry minimal or insufficient labeling.

So, how would you notice if your student is using caffeine powder? Here are some symptoms to look for:

* Rapid or erratic heartbeat
* Seizures
* Vomiting
* Diarrhea
* Disorientation
* Increased thirst
* Insomnia
* Headaches
* Irritability
* Uncontrollable muscle movements
* **Be scrupulously correct.** Parents and students: do not rely on spell check alone!Stress to your child that this is the time to make use of the best eyes they can find: English instructors, parents, mentors. Get several sets of feedback on personal statements and have a trusted person give it the once-over for correctness before sending it off. Sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, etc., should be as perfect as your child can make them for this document. Remember that the readers will be able to tell many important things about the writer from their personal statement: attention to detail, communication skills, and English and writing skills.

* **Carefully follow all the posted guidelines of the application process.**  This is the first place that colleges, workplaces, etc., will reduce the number of applications by seeing who follows directions and who does not. Always urge your child to check and double check the submission guidelines: if they specify a word limit of 250, do not exceed that word limit. If they specify online application only, or list supporting documents that are required, be sure to comply exactly. Your child’s willingness to follow the requirements precisely will make the difference between their materials being considered or not.

Close attention to these details will pay off by positioning your child for full consideration for the exciting opportunity that they seek.

**How to Write a Successful Personal Statement**

By Linda Sirois

Knowing how to write an effective personal statement is a skill that will serve your child throughout their academic career. There are many types of situations that will require some form of a “personal statement”: college applications, internship opportunities, scholarship applications, medical school or graduate school applications, or travel abroad programs, just to name a few. Their purpose is to separate out the students who are passionate about their desire to attend, and to get to know something about the personality of the student who is applying for the position. This is your child’s opportunity to spotlight his or her unique qualities.

There are three crucial things to keep in mind when composing a personal statement. Your child should:

* **Present the best version of *themselves*.** Remember that the judges of whatever your child is applying for are looking for a passionate interest in their program or position. Panels want applicants who are a good fit for their opening and who will follow through and make the most of the opportunity.

Your child should show why he or she is a great fit for this position/scholarship/opportunity by tying it to their life experiences thus far. For example, Clara was applying for graduate school to be a speech therapist; she used her childhood interventions with a younger brother who had speech difficulties to explain her interest in helping children who struggle to communicate. Another student, Tony, related his interest in medical school to time spent with his grandfathers, who were both practicing physicians. Encourage your child to give the readers a sense of their special qualities; give details. Identify the story that tells them who your child will be in the program and what sets them apart from the others.

If there are gaps in your child’s successes, they can turn them into strengths. For instance, if their grades took a hit in freshman year due to being distracted or careless, your child can show the panel how they learned from that and moved forward, wiser. If a negative event shows up on their records, they can address it and explain how they emerged with more focus or self-knowledge.

**Identifying Mentors in High School, College, and Beyond**

By Linda Sirois

What can an academic mentor do for your child? Recommend programs and courses, write letters of reference for jobs, colleges, and internships, believe in his or her potential when they feel discouraged, and help guide your child toward goals they may not even be able to identify or articulate at this point. High school is a great time to begin to establish mentoring relationships.

Think of an academic mentor as a caring professional who remembers what it’s like to be standing in a student’s shoes. Most professionals that they will encounter in school as teachers, counselors, coaches, and professors are involved in the field of education because they care deeply about the students and their academic and, often, personal progress. Many of these subject experts expect, and seek out, opportunities to mentor their students, while others may be very willing to mentor but assume that students will approach *them* with questions or needs. As your child moves from high school to college, explain to them that mentoring relationships are an accepted part of academia and career success; the further they go, the more important these relationships become.

Identifying potential mentors generally begins with noticing which professionals in their school they feel most comfortable with. Most positive student-mentor relationships begin with a strong shared interest in a certain field of study or sport, like English, science, or track. Those who have a built a career around these activities of mutual interest are valuable advisors; the passion they feel for their subject and their learning experiences can be invaluable to your child.

Urge your child to seek out subject area mentors early in their academic or sports career. After they have noticed one or more teachers or coaches who shares their enthusiasm for a sport or subject, and your child feels comfortable with them, encourage your child to ask if the teacher or coach would be willing to help advance their knowledge in the shared area of interest: recommend books or authors on a topic, help to improve your child’s skill set, or give pointers on areas of struggle. Be sure your child knows that the foundation of a positive mentor relationship rests in the student’s proven willingness to work hard at their chosen subject or sport. Help your child to understand that they shouldn’t feel discouraged if their first choice of a mentor declines to help, or doesn’t work out. There is no way of knowing how busy or complicated another person’s life is; instruct your child to simply thank them anyway, and to consider approaching someone else.

When your child and a professional have worked together and have gotten to know each other as student and teacher or athlete and coach, your child can feel comfortable asking for their mentor’s help with job references, writing letters of recommendation, and so on. Very often, the mentor will offer first. It is important to help your child to understand that their mentor is extending themselves on your child’s behalf. Most likely, your child’s mentor has multiple obligations and activities, so be sure to give plenty of advance notice, contact information, and the necessary deadlines to mentors when requesting written materials. And stress to your child the importance of expressing gratitude; a note or an e-mailed message is always appreciated.

The ability to identify and approach potential mentors is a skill that will serve your child in high school, college, graduate school, and throughout their career. When we understand that most professionals were on the receiving end of a mentor-student relationship themselves, it becomes easier to ask for their guidance. With hard work, your child will someday be on the giving end of mentoring and enjoying the great feeling of extending a helping hand to someone who will be looking up at all they have accomplished.

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GEAR UP Director Shirley Brozzo  
GEAR UP Student Coordinator Meredith Waara

HAPPY HOLIDAYS from the GEAR UP staff at NMU. Shirley and Meredith look forward to working with you during 2015!

Plans for GEAR UP Spring Break Tour and Summer Camp

All plans are tentative at this point.

**Spring Break Tour** includes 2 days of travel and 3 days of campus visits downstate including Michigan State University and Lansing Community College on Day 1; Olivet College and Albion College on Day 2; and University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and Washtenaw Community College on Day 3.

GEAR UP will cover all transportation costs on Checker Transportation, all hotels and three meals per day. The hotels will have pools available. Evening events will include workshops on college prep, finances, and leadership activities. Many snacks will be provided throughout the trip.

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**The Summer Leadership Camp and College Tour** includes visiting schools in Wisconsin. Day 1 includes visiting University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Rasmussen College. Day 2 will include Lawrence University and Fox Valley Technical College. On Day 3 there is a planned stop at Globe University. Edgewood College and Herzing University are on the schedule for Day 4. Day 5 will be career preparation with a visit to Noah’s Ark in Wisconsin Dells. After a workshop on internships and careers at Noah’s Ark, the rest of the day will be spent exploring the park and all it has to offer.