

College Home > Student Life > Blogs > College Life > I'm Struggling in College ... Now What? 6 Tips for Getting Back on Track

I'm Struggling in College ... Now What? 6 Tips for Getting Back on Track

By Emily Hayden on 6/27/2017

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Everyone begins their college experience with a fresh slate—excited to learn and meet people who have the potential to become lifelong friends. But what happens when the lofty rhetoric of college being the “greatest time of your life” isn't quite lining up with reality? What if you find yourself falling behind in college instead of excelling?

Struggling in college isn't uncommon, and the sinking feeling that comes with poor grades can discourage even the most determined student. But that doesn't mean you need to throw your hands up and call it quits. Whether your difficulties stem from a lack of preparation, competing demands from work and family or just a bad stretch of effort, the important thing is that you refocus yourself and do what you can to correct the issue.

So what should a struggling college student do? Let's start with following the advice and strategies of those who know what it takes to recover from college struggles.

6 ways to overcome struggling in college

We asked several professionals who work with college students on a daily basis to provide their best advice for students who are looking to get back on track. Take a look at what they have to say—you may just find the nugget of wisdom that helps turn things around.

1. Articulate your goals

College offers plenty of opportunities to explore and try new things, but it can, at times, be easy to lose sight of what you're going to school for in the first place. It might seem simple, but stating exactly what you're trying to accomplish is an excellent way to keep yourself focused.

Michella Chiu, Admissions Consultant and Chief Language Advisor at PROFEDVICE, emphasizes the importance of deciding what you want in your future. Chiu acknowledges it is easy for college students to get caught up in all the options offered by colleges and forget to prioritize those options by a well-defined goal for the future.

Once you are committed to a goal, create specific tasks to help you achieve it. Ask yourself if the classes you are taking, the clubs you join and the friends you choose will support you in achieving the goal.

2. Tap into school resources

Struggling with various classes, time management, career choices and navigating new relationships are challenges that colleges expect students to encounter. In fact, many schools offer resources and host organizations to assist with these challenges.

Take a look at some common options:

- **Tutoring services:** Many colleges offer some form of tutoring or academic support services—don't be afraid to use them, even if you're feeling a little embarrassed. "Tutoring services are everywhere and should not be considered weak. Use them!" says Erin Goodnow, founder and CEO of Going Ivy. These services can help with anything from learning how to take notes to explaining how to use the Pythagorean Theorem.
- **Career centers:** These centers are perfect for making sure your coursework and any extracurricular activities will help in landing a job or improving your qualifications to earn a promotion at a job you already have.
- **Alumni or student networks:** You are not the first student to fall behind in college. Alumni in these networks are often eager to assist current students, and getting in touch with graduates or other current students who have encountered similar challenges can offer perspective.

3. Ask for help

Though a seemingly obvious next step for a struggling student, reaching out for support might feel like a waste of time or seem weak when you are overwhelmed and only see failure in your college future.

"Needing help is not an indication that something is wrong with a student," says Tammy Hopps, Learning Services Coordinator at Rasmussen College. "On the contrary—the opposite is true. The students who reach out are generally the most successful."

Remember, your instructors don't take any pleasure in seeing you fail—their job is to teach you. Most will appreciate the fact you're willing to admit you need help and will do what they can to clarify a subject.

4. Trust yourself

Perhaps you are someone who has generally been successful when it comes to high school courses or your job performance. You don't ever remember facing the types of challenges you now encounter in college, and suddenly you assume these struggles mean you're just not good enough and wasting your time.

Hopps recalls witnessing this exact situation with various students in her time at Rasmussen College. "Even though students may have skills to be successful, they may doubt themselves," she explains. "This can lead to giving up easily instead of fulfilling their potential."

Many make the mistake of assuming your ability to learn is based solely on your "natural" intelligence—but in reality, much of it is tied to your work ethic. You have what it takes to succeed academically, even if it doesn't always come as easily as you'd like. Attitude is something you'll always have control over, so stay positive, trust yourself and don't get bogged down by thinking too much about what hasn't gone well so far.

5. Fix your study habits and environment

One seemingly small factor that could be having a large impact on your academic success is your study environment. There's no one-size-fits-all answer to the question of what is the ideal study environment, but there are some factors everyone should consider. Are there too many distractions where I study? Is it too quiet or too loud there? Am I studying at a less-than-ideal time of day?

Addressing your study environment is just part of the equation, though. If you're struggling academically, it's certainly worth your time to reflect and reevaluate the way you're approaching your coursework—are you taking good notes? Do you plan ahead or set aside time to do your work? Set yourself up for success by controlling what you can.

6. Take care of yourself

It's easy for self-care to fall off of a college student's list of priorities, particularly for students who are working while attending college. But failing to take care of yourself or being over-stressed can quietly damage your ability to learn and retain information.

Stress-reducing activities like working out and incorporating healthy foods into your diet can help give you the energy you need to maintain focus during intense lectures and lengthy study sessions before important exams.

It's time to bounce back

These tips should help you realize that struggling in college is a common challenge you can overcome. Remember, a rough patch academically isn't the end of your college career. Work hard and follow the advice above, and you'll be on the road to recovery before you know it.

If you'd like to learn more about the helpful resources available to Rasmussen College students, check out our article, "[10 Surprising Resources You Didn't Know Rasmussen College Offered](#)."

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Emily is a freelance writer for Collegis Education who writes student-focused articles on behalf of Rasmussen College. Her excitement about research and writing comes from 7 years of teaching junior high language arts, and she believes in the value of writing's ability to educate and empower both the writer and the reader.

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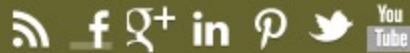
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