

Upgrade Program- San Antonio Education Partnership

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Name of Key Area	College Transition
Title	5 Tips for Returning to College
Goal	The goal is for individuals to get some general advice on what to expect when returning to college.
Advisor & Date	Lowell Butler, Fall 2017

I know as adult learners many of you are combating feelings of nervousness or even anxiety at the thought of finding yourselves once again on a large college campus. Even those of you who have elected to pursue your studies online may be grappling with the same experiences. As an adult learner myself I wanted to share with you all some tips that may help you along in your journey back to the classroom.

1) **Change Your Mindset**

As adult learners we tend to view education as a means to an end; meaning that our primary motivations for returning to school are usually tied to the prospect of a big raise or a career change. While that may be true we forget that education is also a journey. When we view coursework as just a set of hoops to jump through we miss the changes taking place inside of ourselves. Learning is transformational! Expect to be challenged in your point of view, stressed from multiple assignments due on the same dates, pushed by your professors who want nothing more than for you to unlock your full potential and exhausted from all of it. Believe me you will be better for it. As adults our first reaction when faced with a challenge may be to run, after all we have better things to do. Instead tell yourself you're simply delaying gratification; that will help you when it gets hard.

2) **Get to Know Your Classmates**

I can hear it now, "I don't want to be stuck in class with some 20 something year old kid." When we say things like this we are missing out on opportunities for personal growth. Why? There are areas where you can both help each other. For example, the 20 something year old isn't worried about our age. That's our issue. Instead of focusing on that we should look at it as an opportunity to pass along our life experiences to those who could certainly benefit. You may be able to help them secure their first post college job, you may presently be working in an industry they hope to someday break into. In return these kids have grown up in the age of computers and technology. They can teach you ways to utilize technology for your classes or everyday tasks. That 20 year old may become a member of your study group, may volunteer to take notes for you in the event you can't make it to class or may even have the ability to explain a portion of the coursework in a way that you understand. Your own kids will also be impressed to know that you finally figured out how to use Twitter or Snapchat!

3) **Get to know your instructors**

Your instructors typically have several years of work experience before coming into academia, or still may even be working in the given field that they teach. They appreciate your life experiences, but try not to make the mistake of thinking your experience is all that matters. Remember professors teach from the perspective of "generally speaking" if it does not match up with your life experiences try not to challenge the professor. The opportunity to discuss the differences may present itself after class or in a written assignment. You may also find that you have a lot in common. Don't be afraid to get to know them they are your greatest advocates; contrary to what some people think professors do not want to fail you! Open communication can solve a majority of issues that may arise. If you are having a hard time

grasping the material let them know immediately not the day before the assignment is due, at this point it is too late for them to offer any meaningful assistance unless you are looking for clarification.

4) Prepare your family and employer

Two of our biggest responsibilities are usually work and family. In order to be successful you have to be willing to make changes to make room for not just class time, but studying as well. If it means changing your off days at work to have more time the study, requesting a third day off or not taking the kids on a weekly outing so be it. You may need to be willing to make sacrifices. If you spread yourself too thin you run the risk of quitting when it all became too much.

5) Let go of past failures

I know when we have a traumatic experiences with classes we tend to only remember the end result. I failed math. So we end up avoiding math or school in general for fear of repeating failure. We should instead stop and consider what conditions existed when we failed math ten years ago? Were you a new mother struggling to juggle the needs of your newborn? Fast forward to today that newborn is now 16 and doesn't needs as much help anymore. Were you taking 4 classes and didn't have time to study as much in an area you are already weak in? This time take the class by itself and take advantage of services offered by the college. Don't be afraid to speak to the professor about reservations remember *they don't want to fail you!* Ask the 20 something year old kid to explain it to you if they understand. Approach the class with a different outlook and be willing to do what it takes; not only can you survive, but you can thrive.

