

C.H.A.T.S.

Chicago Healthy Adolescent Transition Study



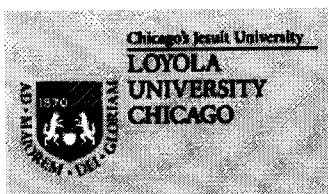
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THANK YOU

For your support of
the project!

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Letter from Dr. Holmbeck

We are delighted to report that we have secured funding for a **Time 6** data collection! Why Time 6? As you know, we have been studying families since your child was 8 or 9 years old. At Time 6, your child will be 18 or 19 years old. This data collection (which will take less of your time than in the past) will enable us to examine ways in which behaviors during childhood are related to how children behave during the transition to adulthood.

Unlike previous visits, the **Time 6** data collection will not be in your home. Instead, we will be mailing a set of questionnaires for each of you to complete and return to us through the mail. Some of you have already participated and we thank you for returning the measures so quickly. We are also pleased to report that we have (thus far) visited 120 of the 152 families at **Time 5**. Thanks so much to all of you for all the time and energy you have given us.

You might also like to know that you are part of the **largest and longest running study** ever conducted on families of children with spina bifida. Given this, we will be able to provide vast amounts of new information on this condition, including how spina bifida affects children and their families. We are proud of our accomplishments to date and I want you to know that we would never have been able to provide such new knowledge without your hard work!

We would like to remind you about our **NEW WEB SITE!** Please check it out at: www.luc.edu/depts/psychology/chats. Let us know what you think of it!! I know that some of you have been interested in seeing papers and articles that we have written—there are some of these posted on the web site. There is also lots of other information at the site about adolescence and spina bifida.

As we have mentioned before, this is a longitudinal study (which means that we study the same families over time and that we try to keep everyone in the study). I know it may be frustrating that we have not sent you a complete detailed summary of our findings. If we were to summarize our findings for you before we finish the study, it might bias your future responses to our measures. But I want to reassure you that we remain entirely committed to learning more about adolescent development, that we continue to present and publish our findings to health care professionals and teachers, and, most importantly, that we want to provide information that will ultimately help provide better services to those in need. Once the study is done, we will send you a complete report of our findings.

From all of us at CHATS, we thank you and hope that you are having an enjoyable spring and summer. Feel free to contact me anytime. As always, **if you have moved**, please give us a call.

Update on Adolescent Research

By Kerry O'Mahar

Students sometimes have trouble making the adjustment from high school to college, particularly when they have academic or learning difficulties. Educational psychologist Bruce W. Tuckman, Ph.D. has created a course to help students improve their study skills and increase their desire to learn. The class is called "Individual Learning and Motivation (ILM)." Drawing on the work of many psychologists, Dr. Tuckman's Ohio State University course helps students develop a number of skills, such as how to manage their time better. The course takes place in a computer lab, using a software program called Active Discovery and Participation through Technology (ADAPT). A teacher is in the classroom as well, answering questions the students might have. Using a computer allows immediate practice of the skills being taught and instant feedback on how the student did on a task. It also helps students work through the program as quickly as they like. In addition, the computer sets and keeps deadlines for assignments and quizzes. It appears that the course may work – on average students increase their GPA by .70!

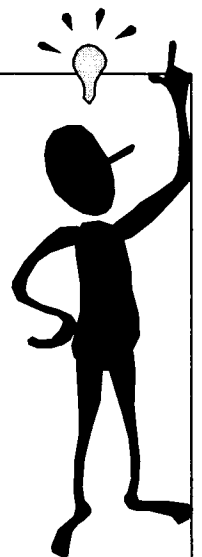
This study was printed in *Monitor on Psychology*, a publication by the American Psychological Association. For more information about this study, visit the APA website at www.apa.org and look up the article by title ("Learning how to learn: A psychologist's course combats failure in college, and now in high school") or by author (Sadie F. Dingfelder). This website also contains other psychological resources and articles for you to enjoy.

Interview Tips

By Barbara Jandasek

Whether you're planning on going to college or getting a job after high school, it is important to start thinking about your interviewing skills. Interviews may seem intimidating, but a little thought and preparation can go a long way. Remember, interviews are as much for your benefit as for the person on the other side! They can be a great source of information to help you make the best decision. We hope these tips help!!!

1. Have a positive attitude. Present yourself as someone who is committed and strives to do their best. Provide concrete examples of your hard efforts and successes.
2. Your physical appearance (clothes, hairstyle, makeup, etc.) should be appropriate for the interview. It is usually better to dress conservatively. If you're not sure, ask a parent.
3. Throughout the interview, maintain eye contact, smile, and watch your body language. This will tell your interviewer that you are interested and confident.
4. Do research before the interview. Make sure you are familiar with the company/college so you can talk about it well and come up with good questions for the interviewer.
5. Doing a practice interview with a friend, parent, or counselor, can prepare you and make you feel more confident for the real thing.



Elections 2004: It's up to you!

By Brigid Rose

Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, this is one of the most exciting presidential elections you've experienced so far. Why? Most of you are now eligible to vote. For the first time, many of you will have a say in who leads our country. Unfortunately, young people's involvement in voting has dropped over the years. People between the ages of 18 and 25 made up 14.2% of the electorate in 1972, but only 7.8% in 2000. The last presidential election came down to an extremely small number of votes. Your vote (and the votes of your friends) can make a huge difference. Don't give up your right to express your opinion. But remember, you can't vote if you're not registered. You can register at the county clerk's office or a local village office. Take action today!

Warning Signs: Alcohol Abuse

By Jill Zukerman

How do you know when you or a friend has a problem with alcohol? If any of the following applies to someone you know, it may be time to seek help.

- Drinking to calm nerves, forget worries, or cure a sad mood
- Guilt about drinking
- Unsuccessful attempts to cut down/stop drinking
- Lying about or hiding drinking habits
- Causing harm to oneself or others as a result of drinking
- Needing to drink greater amounts of alcohol in order to achieve desired effect
- Feeling irritable, resentful, or unreasonable when not drinking
- Spending a great deal of time getting alcohol and drinking alcohol
- Drinking in risky situations such as before driving or before engaging in unwanted/unprotected sex

What to do if you think a friend has a problem:

- Let your friend know that risky drinking, including binge drinking, can lead to more severe alcohol problems including alcohol dependence, as well as injuries and unwanted/unprotected sex.
- Don't make excuses for your friend's behavior. Excuses allow your friend to avoid changing for the better.
- Choose a good time to talk to your friend, when he or she is sober, when both of you are calm, and when you can speak privately.
- Be specific and tell your friend that you are concerned about his/her drinking and want to support him or her in getting help. Back up your concerns with examples of the ways in which his or her drinking has caused problems for both of you.
- Seek out resources to help your friend
 - National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, www.niaaa.nih.gov
 - Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, www.al-anon.alateen.org
 - Alcoholics Anonymous World Services www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

Research and Spina Bifida

By Mona Abad and Grayson Holmbeck

Adapted from an article submitted to the ISBA Newsletter

For several years, the Spina Bifida Association of America (SBAA) and the Spina Bifida Foundation have tried to enhance scientific research addressing the physical, neurological, and psychological aspects of spina bifida. In June 2002, SBAA began planning a conference to promote a national research agenda for spina bifida. They appointed 94 experts in the field across the nation to perform critical reviews of the current literature. In May 2003, the conference, *Evidence-Based Practice in Spina Bifida: Developing a Research Agenda*, was held in Washington, D.C.

During the conference, experts presented critical literature reviews on various topics, then hour-long small group discussions were held. Topics included: (1) brain and spinal cord surgery, (2) intellectual functioning and learning, (3) sexuality, (4) family functioning, (5) socialization, (6) behavioral and mental health, (7) self care, (8) urology, (9) education and employment, (10) reproductive issues, (11) orthopedics, (12) mobility, (13) gastroenterology/nutrition, (14) skin breakdown, and (15) latex allergies. Researchers were encouraged to identify key issues relevant to this population, to identify factors that put individuals at increased risk for future impairment, and to develop and test the different types of treatments needed by individuals with spina bifida for optimal functioning. The conference also challenged researchers to use participants that from differing ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, so that research findings will apply to a greater number of people. Furthermore, researchers were encouraged improve the validity of their results by recruiting larger numbers of participants for their studies and following them over time.

Some specific recommendations for future research that are particularly relevant for parents and families include: how to go about assessing and treating hydrocephalus from infancy to adulthood, understanding the earliest indicators of learning difficulties in school and what type of instructional interventions would be most effective in facilitating learning, and what factors are helpful in teaching self care to the family member with spina bifida. The conference highlighted the need to research how individuals with spina bifida socialize and in what ways they can have better peer relationships, how to help families cope with spina bifida, as well as how to help individuals with spina bifida increase their independence, participate in the labor force, and address self-esteem and body image issues to prevent depression and anxiety.

Paralympics

By Dan Wnek

Many of you were inspired by Jean Driscoll, a gold-medal Olympic athlete with spina bifida, when she spoke at the Illinois Spina Bifida Association conference last year. Interested in more information about athletes who never let a physical disability get in the way?

In 1948, an Englishman by the name of Sir Ludwig Guttman arranged an athletic competition for World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries. Four years later, participants from Holland joined the English athletes and founded the Paralympics. By 1960, 400 athletes participated in the Paralympic Games in Rome. This year, over 5000 competitors representing more than 140 countries are expected to participate. The games have become an intense and impressive competition, focusing on the athlete and athletic competition and *not* on disabilities. This year, the Paralympic Games will begin on September 17 in Athens. Athletes will compete in 19 sports, including swimming, archery, volleyball (sitting), and wheelchair basketball. We can't wait to see the results. Don't forget to cheer for your team!