

BEAR POWER FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Issue 3: October 1, 2020



PHOTO DESCRIPTION: STUDENTS, STAFF, AND AMBASSADORS MET FOR A QUICK IMPROMPTU FRIEND LUNCH AT THE TACO BELL RIGHT NEXT TO CAMPUS

WAYS TO NOT HINDER YOUR STUDENT'S PROGRESS

by Avery Brooks

Hi there! We are so glad you have joined us for the third installment of the Bear POWER Family Newsletter! In this week's entry, we will give you advice on ways to avoid hindering your student's progress. We know that, as a parent, you want nothing more than for your student to succeed. However, as we have noted in the last two editions, even the most well intended actions can have a negative impact on your student's journey to full independence. Thus, this week's newsletter has been designed to help you avoid actions that may unknowingly restrict your student from progressing during their time here at Missouri State. One of the greatest hindrances to your student's progress is contacting your student's professors, Ambassadors, or roommates in any way. Once your student has been moved into their residence here on campus, they are fully responsible for communicating their needs and desires to those around them. At first, this may not come naturally to your student; prior to this, your student may not have needed to formally contact their peers or teachers for help because they had their own built-in support system at home. When



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WAYS TO NOT HINDER YOUR STUDENT'S PROGRESS

WAYS TO NOT HINDER YOUR STUDENT'S PROGRESS (CONT.)

they move to college, though, they do not have this convenience, so they must learn how to express their thoughts without the aid of others. Therefore, this does not provide you with an excuse to "help" them. While we know your aid is meant with nothing but the best of intentions, doing these activities for your student deprives them of learning the skill of communicating their needs independently. This also infringes upon your student's newfound privacy; by you communicating for them on their behalf, you are not allowing your student to have matters that remain their own. This then implies to them that they are still a "child" that is incapable of carrying a conversation autonomously. However, we do not want you to worry; we at Bear POWER will not leave your student stranded to fend for themselves. Not only does our program teach each student the information necessary to effectively communicate their needs and wants in their respective conversations, we also surround your student with a strong team of Ambassadors that help guide them through any obstacles they may face. Another stumbling block to your student's progress is how you label them to others. This may seem odd, but let us give you an example to better illustrate our point. As you are bringing up boxes to your



PHOTO DESCRIPTION: BEAR POWER STUDENTS AND AMBASSADORS PARTICIPATED IN A CAMPUS SCAVENGER HUNT (MASKED, OF COURSE!)

student's room during move-in day, you meet their new roommate. While you and your family are introducing yourselves to the individual, you say, "This is our son/daughter, and he/she is in the Bear POWER program here at MSU." While this seems to be an innocent introduction, it has harmful side effects under the surface. By stating that your student is in Bear POWER, you are labeling them to the people around them as someone that has a disability. Our program is designed to transform these students from being "a person with a disability" into a student who has the same talent and potential as any other student here at Missouri State. By stating that they are in Bear POWER to others right off the bat, you are confining your student to a stereotype that society has created for individuals who have disabilities, a barrier which our organization is trying to acknowledge and break. To avoid this, we advise that you

encourage your student to internally address their differences and to take pride in themselves rather than hide behind a label that society has falsely written! Down the road, if your student wants to share that they are a part of the wonderful Bear POWER community, then THEY can communicate that information to whomever they please; we just ask that you do not do it for them. We hope that these tips prove helpful as you continue to encourage your student from the sidelines. We know that this transition from coach to cheerleader can be challenging (who remembers this from week one?!), but we promise that the end result is worth it, as nothing is more rewarding than seeing your student blossom into a young adult right before your eyes. We hope you join us next week for our fourth topic, How to Support Your Student Over Campus Breaks, which will be just in time for the Fall Holiday!