

# ADHD And College

A prescription for success.



## Gail Naron Chalew

Special to the Jewish Times

For almost every student, the transition from high school to college is not easy.

Even those students whose parents have wisely given them more responsibilities as they have matured may be thrown off kilter by the freedoms they encounter in college: the freedom to wake up when they want, the freedom to determine how much and when they will study and whether they will even go to class, and the freedom to party.

For those with learning disabilities, particularly those with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), the lack of structure that was formerly imposed by their parents and high schools, when combined with the freedoms they encounter at college, may add up to a prescription for failure.

Guidance counselors and learning specialists agree that the key to turning this into a prescription for success is to know oneself.

"By the time students with ADHD enter college, they need to be able to articulate how it affects their life — socially and academically. Those on medication need to be able to manage their medication schedule independently. They also must be aware of the signs that their medication needs to be adjusted," notes Mrs. Deborah Rapaport, director of academic support at Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community High School.

Along with this self-knowledge must be a willingness to advocate for themselves. Mrs. Rapaport adds, "Every college now has an academic learning center and office for disability services. Students need to learn how to navigate the process; they have to be comfortable going to that office, presenting documentation on their disability and then talking to professors about any accommodations they may need."

"In short, the student who is comfortable in his or her own skin should be successful at college," says Mrs. Rapaport. In her experience, however, one real pitfall is

that generally, the brighter the student, the less he or she wants to disclose about any learning disability.

Gretchen Marcus, the director of the Academic Center for Excellence at Goucher College, takes this importance of self-awareness one step further:

"By the time students come to college, they should be aware of their own learning styles and habits. Are they most efficient at studying in the morning or evenings? What is the best way for them to organize their assignments? Maybe they do not need a quiet place to study and so they can study in their rooms, but maybe they will need to stake out a place in the library to study."

Like centers that are found at every college, Goucher's Academic Center is staffed with professional learning specialists who will work one-on-one with students with learning disabilities.

The conventional wisdom is that ADHD and college are a volatile mix, but Jean Ginsberg, the director of guidance at Beth Tfiloh, turns some of that wisdom on its head.

"For those ADHD students who can take advantage of the unstructured time and the many activities available, college gives them the chance to be very productive. Having so much time available can be a positive as these students now find they have time to do everything they want to accomplish. They have the opportunity to find outlets for their many interests.

Adds Ms. Ginsberg, "On a very basic level, those students who had difficulty in high school going to class after class still for an hour or two and then they walk across campus to their next class. These frequent breaks for physical activity can be very helpful.

"College can be a real gift for ADHD students who finally can do everything and be everything they want to be," concludes Ms. Ginsberg. □

Gail Naron Chalew is a local freelance writer.

## Tips For College Success For Every Student (But Particularly For Those With ADHD)

Consider taking a gap year instead of going straight from high school to college. A year-long program in Israel where students live away from home, but under more supervision than at college or attending a community college for a year, provides a good transition.

Use the resources of the college's academic center — before you are doing poorly in classes.

Purchase any type of academic planner and then use it, putting every assignment and deadline in it.

Use an alarm clock and get up at the same time every weekday.

Be sensitive to the need to adjust medications to the college schedule. Ask your pediatrician for a referral near the college, or find out if doctors at the student health center have experience treating ADHD.

Consult a guidebook to colleges and learning disabilities. The K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder (Princeton Review) and Survival Guide for College Students with A.D.H.D. or LD (American Psychological Association) are two helpful guides.

# College Admissions

Expect pre-acceptance stress and deal with it.



## Kimberly Trompeter

Special to the Jewish Times

These days, kindergartners are already learning to read and comprehend on grade level. Oftentimes the future of these 5-year-olds is mapped out with a defined plan for higher education, first with high school, then with college.

With such an educational blueprint, it's no wonder that by the time they have grown to be sophomores and juniors in high school — and on the brink of finally making their own decisions — their lives

become impeded with stresses they never could have fathomed.

For these students, the junior and senior years of high school are the time to choose the perfect college. It's the time for taking SATs, researching schools, writing essays, mailing applications, conducting interviews and making phone calls on top of maintaining good grades, attending proms and passing final exams. With all of these pressures, keeping one's sanity and staying focused become a crucial component of the college admissions process.

Rebecca Gillette, a 2006 graduate of Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School and current Harvard senior, remembers those intense moments. "During my junior year of high school, my parents bought me a huge college guide book. We sat down and looked at many different schools: small, medium-sized and large," Ms. Gillette said of beginning the process. "I knew that I didn't want to go south of D.C., no farther west than Chicago and St. Louis, and not too far from home," she added. Ms. Gillette also looked at the involvement of the Jewish community, classes offered that fit her field of study, the overall environment and the people.

For Ms. Gillette, Harvard stood out to her from the beginning, and for sensible reasons. "Harvard was a good fit for me," she said. "The opportunities and resources, strong government department with top political scientists, third-largest library and diversity of students made Harvard a good fit." That, in addition to her love for the Boston area, made her choice to apply there simple.

However, some students' college destination is chosen based on upholding an image, rather than comfort and

curriculum. According to Ms. Gillette, her encounters with other students during her first year at Harvard lead her to the conclusion that some students selected Harvard only for the prestige of an Ivy League school.

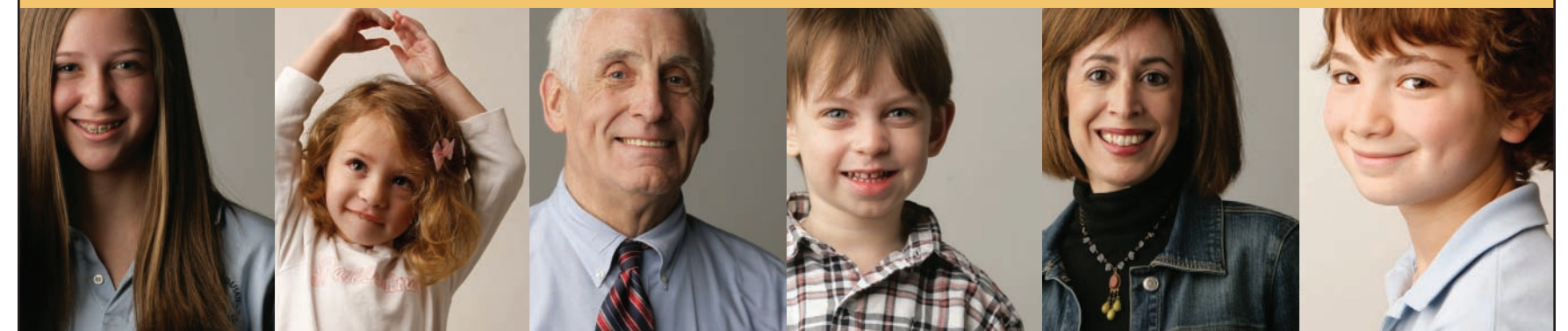
**"By junior year it's really important to discover where you want to be: the location, the feel, etc."**

— Rebecca Gillette

For Ms. Gillette, choosing Harvard had nothing to do with image. In fact, both her parents and counselors advised her to apply to other schools. "I narrowed down

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