

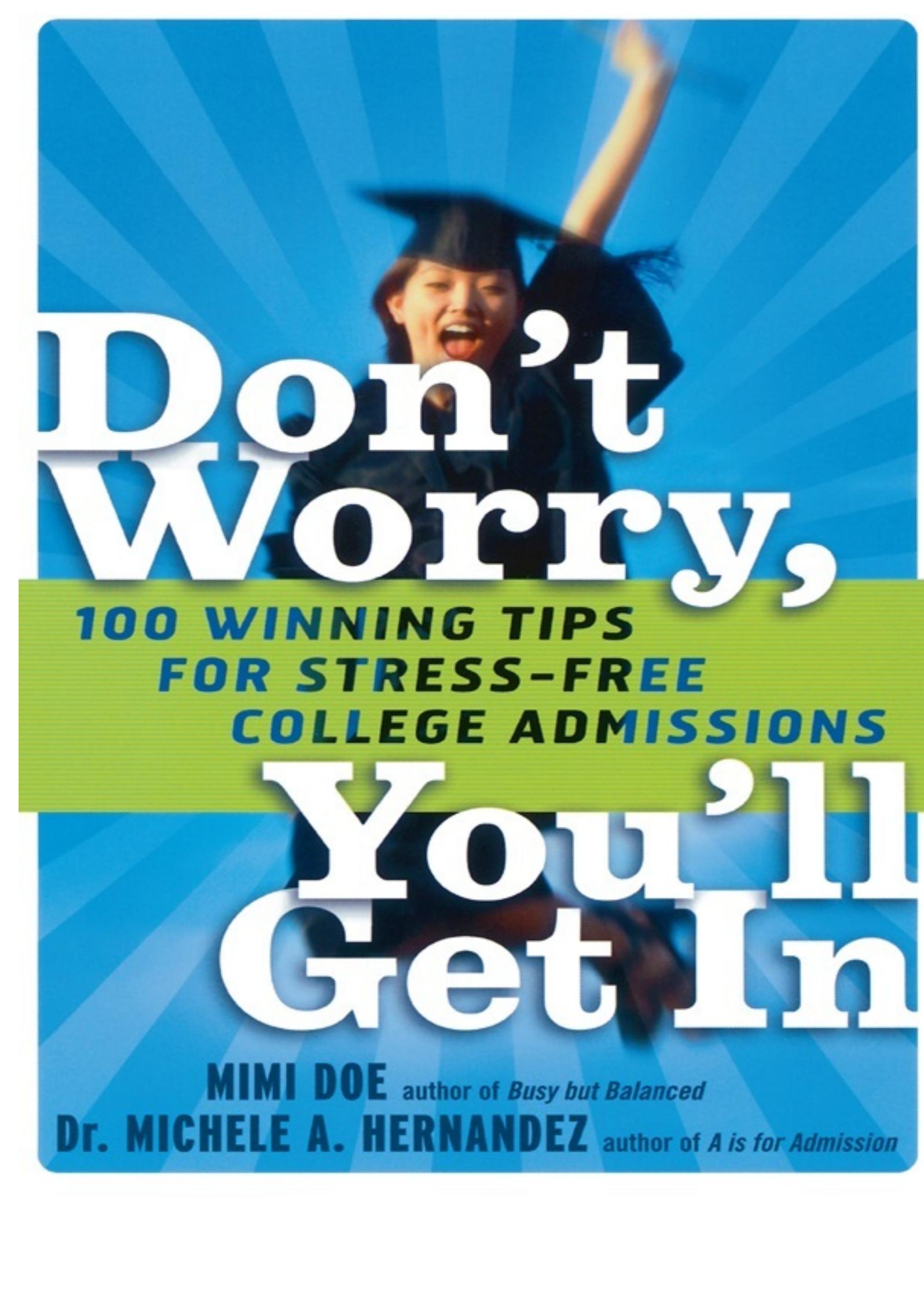
**Don't
Worry,**

**100 WINNING TIPS
FOR STRESS-FREE
COLLEGE ADMISSIONS**

**You'll
Get In**

MIMI DOE author of *Busy but Balanced*

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College Admission

Mimi Do
and Dr. Michele A. Hernandez

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DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL GET IN

100 Winning Tips for Stress-Free College Admissions

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> About the Authors

MIMI DOE is the award-winning author of *Nurturing Your Teenager's Soul: A Practical Approach to Raising a Kind, Honorable, Compassionate Teen*; *Busy but Balanced: Practical and Inspirational Ways to Create a Calmer, Closer Family*; *Drawing Angels Near*; and *10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting: Nurturing Your Child's Soul*, which was awarded a Parents' Choice Approved Seal and was a finalist for the Books for a Better Life Award. She founded the popular Web site www.SpiritualParenting.com and holds a master's degree in education from Harvard University.

Dubbed a "parenting guru" by *Ladies Home Journal*, Mimi is the preeminent expert in the area of spiritual parenting and instilling balance and awareness in the household. She takes a practical yet deeply soulful approach to her subject, offering simple suggestions that can be integrated into the everyday lives of even the busiest families.

Mimi is featured in weekly segments on the Hallmark Channel's New Morning TV and has appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and the *CBS Early Show*. Her work has been covered in such publications as *Child*, *Parenting*, *McCall's*, *Family Circle*, *Redbook*, *Reader's Digest*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *USA Today*, the *London Independent*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Washington Post*.

Mimi reaches over fifty thousand parents through her online newsletter "Spiritual Parenting Thought for the Week" and through workshops and seminars worldwide. She is a featured expert on Beliefhet.com and a contributor to iVillage's parenting section, ParentSoup. Parenting groups based on Mimi's *10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting* are meeting around the world.

She lives in Concord, Massachusetts, with her husband and two teenaged daughters.

DR. MICHELE A. HERNANDEZ has come to be known as the "admissions guru" through her college consulting work with high school students and her best-selling books *A Is for Admission*, *The Middle School Years*, and *Acing the College Application*. She is one of America's leading experts in selective college admissions and counseling services and has been featured in hundreds of newspapers, magazines, and radio and television programs, including *Newsweek*, *Bloomberg*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post*, *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Today Show*, *CNN*, and *MSNBC*. Her online newsletter at hernandezcollegeconsulting.com has a growing following.

As an assistant director of admissions at Dartmouth College for four years and the academic dean of a private high school in South Florida, Michele has crafted a unique angle for assisting students in gaining admission to the most selective colleges, incorporating her "inside perspective" on the admissions adventure. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth College in 1989 and went on to earn a master's degree in English and comparative literature from Columbia University and a doctorate in education. In her spare time, Michele reads as many books as she can, stargazes, exercises, and hangs out with her family. She is married to Bruce Bayliss, who is head of a private school in Portland, Oregon, and has two young children and two golden retrievers. They live in La Grange, Oswego, Oregon.

To contact the authors, head over to: www.DontWorryGetIn.com

There you will find updates to the tips and ideas presented in this book as well as lots of other goodies.

> Introduction

When Mimi and I first met, it was like a cosmic blast with sparks flying and jet-stream bursts streaming in all directions. And this was only over the phone! She called to interview me for a book project about parenting she was working on at the time, but after an hour-long chat, I doubt either of us remembered the reason for the original call. Between her expertise on parenting and mine on college admissions, we could not stop generating ideas and advice. I am just about the fastest talker on earth to begin with, but I can tell you that by the end of the hour, I was talking faster than usual and Mimi was spouting more ideas per minute than I could keep up with. We knew then it was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Over the next year or so, we spoke on an almost daily basis, exchanging advice about our own kids (Mimi's are older, in high school heading toward college, and mine are younger, twenty-one months and elementary school), how to handle the stress of college admissions, and how to keep our collective cools during all the stressful times that invade any family where kids are present. It was out of these conversations that the idea for this book was born: why not combine Mimi's expertise in parenting with mine in college admissions? No one had ever written a college admissions guide that addressed the emotional side of college admissions, arguably one of the most stressful processes families go through. I've been doing private college admissions counseling for the past seven years, and at the end of the process, parents always surprise me by thanking me for saving the family rather than for helping their child get into a particular college (although they get to that eventually).

Mimi and I realized that families have to be armed with as much information as possible. A well-planned college journey is much less stressful than a haphazard one thrown together on an ad hoc basis. Timing is everything, and super-informed parents and students will always be more prepared and less stressed out than those who have not done their research. But sometimes families acquire all the "hard facts" without planning for the emotional backlash. That is where our book comes in. We have organized it in a way that is as user-friendly as possible. There are ten chapters that cover the ten most important aspects of the college admissions process. Within each chapter, on the left-hand page, ten tips are provided that are geared toward the hard facts, the knowledge you need to succeed. I wrote these pages to highlight the most important information for parents and students to keep in mind. On the right-hand page are strategies and advice for how to successfully approach college admissions without giving up your soul, elevating your stress level, or giving in to the urge to throw yourself off a tall bridge. Of course, Mimi wrote all the right-page tips!

Successful students and parents realize that part of getting through this sometimes horrible and seemingly heartless process is to maintain a sense of inner equilibrium and calm while attending to all the details. This book provides an easy blueprint to do just that! Best of luck, and let us know if we've helped you in your college journey as a family and if at the end of the day, your family isn't closer to each other than ever before.

—Michele Hernandez

Michele told you how we met and why we wanted to offer you the tools in this book. I think there are actually one and the same. Some sort of synergy brought Michele and me together so we could

help you get into the college that's your perfect match without a lot of stress and angst. Both of us love teenagers and believe you have the power to change the world. We've given you specific ways to focus your energy and vitality to move through this chapter of your life with grace and joy rather than with frantic stress and exhaustion. Many of the hundreds of teenagers I have talked to and worked with are unable to be fully in the moment to enjoy their high school years, because they are so busy worrying about how each action they take will affect their college choices. Relax! Don't relax too much, but do let go of that obnoxious inner voice that constantly judges you as to whether or not you're stacking up. Although none of us can control everything that happens, we can influence the outcome more often than we think. Feeling helpless in the face of stress is the real enemy, not the stress itself. Come through *Don't Worry, You'll Get In* slowly and see what resonates. Don't feel you have to read it straight through, but rather take it tip by tip as they apply to your stage in the admission process. Use the book as you would a private coach who is there just for you. It's us, Michele and Mimi, shouting "YOU CAN DO IT" in each tip you read. It's us, Michele and Mimi, reminding you to stay organized and wear your pj's to the SAT tests if that's what will make you feel calm. We won't take it too hard when you throw this book across the floor and swear at us as you edit yet another draft of yet another essay because we told you so. We won't go away—we'll just shout a bit louder, YOU CAN DO IT!

I believe in divine order—things unfold as they are meant to. That doesn't mean you can sit around eating tofu and meditating all day. You have to do the legwork and rise to meet the challenges in life. But you have the guidance you need always at the ready. The important thing is not to lose a perspective. Sure, for college admissions it's us talking to you through this book and making the admission process more transparent, but it's also inside of you, that still small voice or gut feeling that you can count on for most decisions. That's your always-available source. Tune in to it often during this time. Trust yourself. And most of all, have fun! Life is really good and so are you! Let us hear from you so we can stop all that shouting!

—Mimi Doe

Your High School Academic Record

> Achieve Your Best

The capacity of man himself is only revealed when, under stress and responsibility, he breaks through his educational shell, and he may then be a splendid surprise to himself no less than to his teachers.

—Harvey Cushing, U.S. surgeon

> Get to know your teachers

One of the most important parts of the college admissions process is the strength of your teacher recommendations. Colleges take these very seriously, as they help sort out who is a high-impact, straight-A student versus a low-impact, straight-A student. Take the time to get to know your teachers during your high school years. Speak to them after class, ask questions, do extra work, and don't let yourself be an anonymous presence in class. Be the student you would love to have in class if you were the teacher!

> Embrace Learning with Gusto

Obstacles cannot crash me, every obstacle yields to stern resolve.

—Leonardo da Vinci, artist

> Open your awareness to the other people in your life

The teachers around you, for instance, offer an endless source of information. All you have to do is ask. But make sure you aren't focused only on what you want out of the relationship. Teachers know the difference between a "schmoozer" and a student who is truly eager to learn and contribute. When you shift from being self-absorbed to caring about others and making meaningful connections, you will find a support system.

> Go the extra mile

Colleges want to see how you've gone above and beyond what is required. If summer reading requires reading a book, read some essays or criticism about the book. Do extra work on a research paper, read beyond what's required in class, bring in outside material as a resource. Show your teacher that you're

pushing yourself and your intellectual explorations. Don't settle for your second-best effort. Share with your teachers the books you've loved, articles from the newspaper, or any "outside" information that is relevant to your class. While you don't want to brownnose, you do want to show your teacher that you can relate outside materials to what you are studying in class.

Above and beyond

> **Take charge of your academic life**

Don't leave your course selections up to someone else. Map out your high school course load and reach for the stars. Sure you want to take the advice of your teachers, counselors, and parents, but ultimately you are the one who is driving this process, so be thoughtful in your approach. Remain honest with yourself in the process. Are you typically afraid of risk? If so, pushing yourself to take all honors classes may put you over the edge. On the other hand, moving gently out of your comfort zone and accepting the challenge may allow you to grow and succeed beyond what you believe is possible. Don't allow fear of failure to hold you back from experiences that will raise the bar.

Take charge

> **Use your guidance counselor as a resource**

Your guidance /college counselor provides an important piece of the puzzle for college admissions officers. They are the "voice" of your school, summarizing how you stack up next to your classmates in the academic competition. They are also your official advocates throughout the college admission process, even if you use an outside counselor. It's never too early to set up an appointment to introduce yourself and to keep your counselor updated on your latest accomplishments. Prepare a short summary of all your extracurricular and academic accomplishments, especially if they took place outside of school. How else will your counselor find out the necessary information to support you? College counselors are your strongest allies besides teachers, so use them to your advantage throughout your four years of high school!

Use your allies

> **Carve out an appointment with yourself at the beginning of each semester and/or when you are feeling overwhelmed**

When you have too much to do, find some time in your day to sit down and plan—doing so will prevent future problems. One busy sixteen-year-old confessed that she hid in the bathroom to find some uninterrupted minutes. Even ten minutes of planning can save hours of doing. Take an even larger chunk of time to schedule a meeting with yourself. Evaluate your life. I know it sounds overwhelming, but taking some time to pause and assess what your interests are academically, for instance, will help guide you in your class decisions for next year. If you discover in your assessment that you truly hate studying languages but feel you “should” keep pressing onward in that area, you may be causing yourself unnecessary stress. Meet with your guidance counselor or another mentor and share your findings. Perhaps his or her input will help guide you to the right choices.

sit down and plan

> **Challenge yourself with tough classes**

Did you know colleges rate the rigor of your course load? They rely upon guidance counselors to rate your course load on a 1 to 4 scale, with 4 being the most rigorous. You are judged by the standard at your school, so make sure if the “norm” is three Advanced Placement (AP) classes during senior year, you at least meet that or go beyond. Remember, an A average or top rank in class is undermined by a weak course load. Rank is always looked at along with course rigor.

challenge yourself

> **Pay attention to stress alarms**

When stress builds in a particular class—as exams approach or you’re running into a brick wall in your research—postpone other important decisions and resist new demands. Turn inward and focus on your highest priorities. If you allow your mind to dwell on the entire spectrum of what you have to accomplish, you could go mad; instead, rein in your thoughts and focus on the task at hand.

Turn inward

> **Don’t fill your schedule with fluff**

Colleges weigh your high school transcript very highly and scrutinize your course selections. Therefore, it does not look good to take wood-shop, band, and basket weaving while your classmates are pushing themselves. Some high schools even weight top classes, so you end up being punished for

taking “easy” classes because your rank will drop. As an additional challenge, take six academic courses rather than the traditional five—add an extra language or history course.

Push yourself

> **Refuse to do anything that violates your personal values**

Remain clear on what truly matters to you. If your friend is in crisis but you’ve got a Spanish test—follow your inner compass. Get your friend the help she needs and talk to your Spanish teacher about the possibility of a day’s delay in taking the test. Or if something looks as if it might be on the verge of being unethical, assume it is. Stress comes when you go against your inner sense of true right and wrong.

follow your
inner compass

> **Pursue learning outside the classroom**

Your high school doesn’t offer philosophy? Check your local community college, nearby college campus, or online courses. Colleges are impressed by students who take their love of learning beyond the bounds of the high school classroom. Do your homework—investigate the options in your town and beyond. Don’t just rest on your laurels and say there were no other opportunities—make your own!

Make your own
opportunities

> **Reach out and help others**

Sometimes we just need to “get over ourselves.” Consider tutoring kids in lower grades or acting as a mentor for someone without the resources you have. Do you love American history, for instance? Take your passion and share it with others. Lead an afternoon course at your town’s middle school, or

start a history book club for elders in your community. As you give of yourself, you will receive benefits you never dreamed of.

help others

> **Plan ahead**

Toward the beginning of high school, look at some examples of academic activities that top students have pursued, and project yourself forward four years (*Adng the College Application* has many examples). Aim to achieve your potential in your main areas of expertise—enter competitions, compete with others outside of your narrow sphere of high school. Colleges are impressed when candidates stand out on the regional, state, or national level in academic activities like Olympiads, Quiz Bowl, national math exams, debate, and so on.

project yourself
forward

> **Articulate your goals**

Begin the habit of writing down your goals, and watch your dreams come true. Write down your goal for the next month, six months, and four years. The trick here, however, is to write them in a positive voice. So rather than saying “I want to get good grades/” say, “I am now on the honor roll, doing my best ever in school and am happily watching those Ks come in.”

write it down

> **Seek help when you need it**

Don't wait until you're failing a class to get help! If you need extra assistance to succeed in a class, be sure to look into getting a tutor. Often the best tutors are students in that class or someone in the next grade who has had your same teacher. If you use a student, you'll pay less and you'll get inside knowledge about that particular teacher. In certain cases you'll want to rely on a professional tutor.

Seek help to succeed

> **Create a team of supporters**

Think of three or four people who can help you with specific goals (improve your confidence, critique your photography, join you on your Saturday runs, help you deepen your knowledge for an AP exam, etc.). Be bold and reach out to these people. It's an honor to be asked, and you may be surprised at how a team of supporters can infuse your goals with the power to manifest.

Reach out for support

> **Keep a strict time schedule**

Strong students are always experts in time management. Be sure to track all your short-term and long-term academic projects so you can make the most of your limited time. Keep a daily planner or computer spreadsheet to help you stay on top of your increasingly difficult workload.

Manage your time
well

> **Take charge of your life by controlling who and what is surrounding you**

Think of your life as a glass jar. There's only so much "stuff" that will fit into that fragile jar. If you fill it with the wrong things—brainless distractions that keep you from focusing on studying and moving forward—and the wrong people—negative folks who only wear you down—you won't have time for positive experiences and supportive people. Wrong choices add up and cause your jar to become way too full, and stress is the result. The right people and positive experiences bring happiness and success. Make a conscious choice about who and what take your time and attention.

Be selective

> **Outline what you have read as the class progresses**

Top students take advantage of academic breaks to catch up on work and then to stay a week ahead. Do some prereading: read the next novel or the next few chapters in your textbooks so you know where the teacher is going. Reread what you have covered in class and outline the chapters in your notebook so you can review throughout the school year, not just at the end of the year. Impress your teachers with your grasp of what's coming up and what has gone by, and bring in outside sources that relate.

stay ahead

> **Understand your personal learning style**

Figure out how you are best able to retain information. Do you like to hear it, see it, or write it? Maybe a combination of all three? How about studying? Are you freshest first thing in the morning? so, than schedule study times accordingly. Do you like to create rewards for yourself in order to complete sections of your studying? Then do so. Are group study sessions just the trick for you? Whatever works for your learning style is key. There's no magic formula or one-size-fits-all for school success.

Know your style

Extracurricular Involvement

> **Make Your Mark**

The time to relax is when you don't have time for it.

—Sydney J. Harris

> **Remember less is more**

Colleges would much rather see you pursue two to three interests in depth rather than seven or eight on a superficial level. Better to excel in a few areas than be mediocre in many. Don't just be a joiner—aim to take a leadership role in your major activities. Instead of being a “member” of a club where you spend twenty minutes a week, be the president or founder of a club that is more time intensive. Throw your efforts behind one or two major activities, and challenge yourself to achieve at the regional, state, or national level. Colleges will assign you an extracurricular rating just as they do an academic ranking. You'll receive a higher ranking if you truly excel in a few select areas than if you are simply a “member” of many clubs.

> **Do What You Love and Success Will Follow**

Start a huge, foolish project, like Noah. It makes absolutely no difference, what people think of you.

—Rumi, Sufi master and poet

> **Combat the blues**

It may sound counterintuitive, but put yourself out into the world rather than withdrawing and feeling sorry for yourself when you are down. Get involved in activities with a social aspect—clubs, teams, theater groups. Later, take time to be alone. In one study, teens admitted spending more than a quarter of their waking hours by themselves. After returning to friends and family, they felt more cheerful, alert, and involved.

> **Focus on a few key areas**

Step back and take a serious look at your strengths. If you love music, feel free to join several different ensembles, play in competitions, perform in the pit orchestra, and continue your lessons.

Colleges do not want well-rounded students—they want a well-rounded class! Be the top cello player or the top singer in your school and community.

focus

> **Learn the fine art of saying “no”**

Practice saying “no” when someone urges you to take on more than you can comfortably fit into your schedule. Remember, every time you say “yes” to something, you must necessarily say “no” to something else, whether you want to or not. No admissions officer wants to see a zillion activities described and a listless, burned-out kid. Be discerning and follow your heart. Learn to say “no” and mean it.

Be discerning

> **Let your enthusiasm be contagious**

Found a new activity you love? Recruit your friends to pitch in, join, or help you run a club. You’ll be a much better leader if you have some friends working with you and are able to transmit your love of the activity to a group of people. Teachers and administrators at your school will take note as well. Ideally you’d like school administrators and teachers to comment on the positive effect you’ve had on the school environment.

enthusiasm

> **Don’t try to duplicate someone else’s achievements**

March to your own drummer, be true to yourself—as cliché as these sound, you will feel less stress and more joy during your high school years if you take them to heart. If it seems as though adults are trying to mold you into someone you aren’t, speak up. Show them by your actions that you are following your own inner voice, and if you begin to doubt, remember that true success comes from unfolding into your true self.

be true to yourself

> **You don't have to be an athlete**

Unless you are strong enough to be a recruited athlete (and most strong athletes never even reach that level), colleges couldn't care less if you play a sport as long as you can account for your free time. Of course they want to see you pursue your interests, but if you don't like sports, don't feel that you have to force yourself to play. Pursue music, scrap booking, astronomy— whatever!

pursue your interests

> **Strive for balance**

Pressure may seem inevitable as you prepare for college admissions, but there are ways you can cope and thrive. Watch for burnout! Signs of it include frustration, deep fatigue, little patience, difficulty sleeping and concentrating, little or no appetite, and a lack of enthusiasm for life. You can be a success, achieve great things, and remain true to yourself without running yourself ragged.

Don't burn out

> **Examine fully all awards and programs in your field of interest**

Do you like politics? Try competing in Model United Nations, national-level debate, or Presidential Classroom. If you like the classics, enter competitions for the Junior Classical League. If you don't know what awards or competitions are available in your areas of interest, ask around; your teachers may know, or you can do some research on the Internet to find out. Chances are your college counselor can steer you in the right direction.

Try competing

> **When you do what you enjoy, you have more energy**

When you go against your heartfelt desires, you drain yourself. I'm not implying you use this as an excuse for discontinuing homework, but make choices in your extracurricular life that lead you to feel

happy, alive, and creative. In fact, begin a list of these “alive” times and choose more of those activities.

do what you enjoy

> **Be a leader**

Top colleges look for the top leaders, the presidents, the editors in chief, the captains. If you don't think you can rise to that level in a particular activity, focus your efforts elsewhere. You want to be the student who is noted for spurring others into action, not the one who sits on the sidelines and watches as others run with the ball. Make yourself a “high impact” applicant, someone who clearly makes a difference.

make a difference

> **Alter your brain waves**

The more you can work on your relaxation habits, the more you are able to change your brain waves. Yup, no kidding. And once those brain waves are slowed down a bit, you are better able to hear your intuitive voice, which is your inner compass. Following this still small voice will never fail to lead you in the right direction. “I can't decide if I have enough time to take a leadership position here or if I should join x club or try out for y play/’ Pause . . . become still. . . listen to your inner promptings. Then, combine that with logic and you're all set to move forward with the right decision.

Relax

> **Make a name for yourself**

In the case of almost every successful applicant, colleges are able to assign a “tag line” to you that sets you apart, like “Susie is the champion figure skater who started her own graphics design business.” You want to make sure you present your strongest traits so colleges will remember who you are and will know how to sum you up when you're presented to admissions committees.

Set yourself apart

> **Select activities that you love**

See your extracurricular activities as a break from your stress rather than a strategy for getting into college. One teen told me: "I love sports because it's like my school is saying it's okay to do what I enjoy. I don't worry about an upcoming test while I'm on the playing field." Nurturing your passion should be a stress reliever, not a stress inducer.

Nurture your
passion

> **Be an entrepreneur**

Do you like babysitting? Walking dogs? Helping others with computers? Start your own business and develop it. Many students show colleges they are "movers and shakers" by starting a small business aligned to their skills. Think about how you can turn one of your talents into a marketable skill.

Be a mover and a
shaker

> **Pick a cause you feel strongly about**

Help others by taking one of your interests and turning it into a community service event. If you are great at fixing up bicycles, then set up a nonprofit group that takes in old bikes, turns them around, and delivers them to homeless shelters. Is there a cause in your local community that needs attention? Raise money on their behalf by tying in the fund-raiser to your hobbies. It's particularly exciting if your event can become an ongoing community endeavor. For example, create an annual bulb sale (you buy the bulbs in bulk or get a garden store to donate them), and give the funds to community gardens that grow for local shelters. You'll find that when you are passionate about a cause, others will be happy to help.

Help others

> Think of the big picture

How do you want to define yourself? As the musician who also likes golf, or the scientist who also is a master chef? Envision how you want admissions officers to see you. Drop any extraneous activities, and focus on those that fill in your overall portrait of who you want to be.

define yourself

> You are the story

Everything you choose to become involved in— outside of your studies—paints a picture of the person you are. So be conscious about your choices and build upon your interests so that the compilation of activities represents depth and dimension rather than just a list of random clubs.

Paint a picture

> Keep a list

Throughout high school you should keep a list of all your involvements outside of school. I guarantee that the fund-raising walk you did in tenth grade will slip your mind two years later when you sit down to write your extracurricular list. By keeping a running list, you will be sure not to leave out important commitments and events that took up a significant amount of time. Learn to be a good record keeper.

list your
involvements

> Excellence is evident

Take the high road when reporting your extracurricular activities on a college application. Paint a clear picture of how you spent your free time, and make sure you don't sell yourself short. You don't have to go overboard, however, to prove your involvement. The outline and description of activities

will illuminate your excellence.

Take the high road

THREE

Summer Plans

> Get Beyond the Beach Vacation

A journey of a thousand miles begins with but a single step.

—Chinese proverb

> Don't wait until the summer before applying to college to get involved in academic activities

High school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors should make good use of their summers. Many of the top summer programs at colleges and private schools fill up well ahead of the spring deadlines, so plan ahead. Focus on your academic interests: if you like science, make sure you check out top science-oriented programs. Remember, sometimes financial aid is available on a need basis, so don't be shy about applying. The Internet is a good first step to sifting out your options. Check strong programs like Cornell's summer school, Columbia's, Andover's, and many others. Advance planning now will come in handy later when you find yourself scrambling to finish these applications by the appropriate deadlines. For now, at least request information from five to ten programs. (See Resources on pages 221-229)

> An Opportunity to Have Fun and Discover Yourself

Sometimes it's important to work for that pot of gold. But other times it's essential to take time off and to make sure that your most important decision in the day simply consists of choosing which color to slide down on the rainbow.

—Douglas Pagels, author

> Start early

No matter what it is you are planning, summer opportunities or starting your college essays, begin early. We feel the most anxiety when we are up against a time wall and therefore aren't as effective in our choices. So start designing your perfect summer right around Thanksgiving. Call for catalogs, use online search engines, talk to local vendors who may need summer employment help. By beginning early, you can craft a thoughtful, well-rounded summer that nurtures your body, mind, and spirit. And you won't hear "sorry were already filled that position."

> **Get a Job**

Many students think that doing community service will get them into top colleges, but that's no longer the case. The truth is that many high schools require community service, so it's difficult to tell who put their heart into it and who did it because it was required. If you want a more productive use of your time both during the year and during the summer, get a job! Or if you're too young to work a real job, start your own business (see page 38)—dog walking, house-sitting, whatever! Not only does holding down a job show responsibility, it also shows that you're not a spoiled, pampered child who has never had to work. Remember, most admissions officers reading your file probably held a job at your age. Don't delay!

Be productive

> **Let go**

Try not to get upset over those things you can't do anything about. If a problem is beyond your control, try your best to accept it until it can be changed. So you don't have the funds to attend the science camp you've been nominated for—rather than seeing this as a problem, see it as an opportunity to use your creativity. Ask about financial aid, or approach a local community group that might consider sponsoring you. Or look at it as divine order or fate, and begin another quest for a way to combine your love of science with making some money. How about a job in your local hospital's lab?

Accept what can't be
changed

> **Mix in some academic programs**

Not all your summer work needs to have an academic focus, but try to maintain a balance. It's reasonable to spend two to four weeks each summer doing something intellectual in a field that interests you, which still gives you many weeks for visiting colleges, hanging out with friends, working, or vacationing with your family.

maintain a balance

> **Take time to unwind**

When planning your summer, make sure to create “stress release time/” No schedule. No agenda. Pick a relaxing place and a simple agenda. The ultimate goal is to “detox” from the pressures of daily life. In fact, why wait for the summer? Put a “chill out weekend” or “downshift evening” on your calendar.

No schedule
No agenda

> **It's okay to vacation with your family**

Keep in mind that colleges look at trends. If you have done research every summer for five straight summers, admissions officers will see your love of research. That doesn't mean you can't save a few weeks of the summer for family time. If you do academic work all summer after a brutal academic year, you will simply burn out.

family time

> **Foster and deepen your close relationships**

Don't craft a summer that is so busy that you don't have time to spend with the people you love. All too soon you will most likely be living apart from your family and childhood friends, so reach out and make even closer connections this summer. It might mean taking the initiative to organize a family weekend activity or launching a business with two pals who have similar interests.

Make connections

> **Don't do it just to get into college**

This point is important both for your own sanity and for college purposes. College admissions officers are sharp—it will be obvious if you did your only academic program the summer before applying to college. In short, don't do something simply because it “looks good.” What really looks good to admissions officers is when students follow their own interests and pursue them in novel and interesting ways.

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