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10 Steps to Picking the Right College

Acceptance letters are out. Are you ready to make a decision?

By [KATY HOPKINS](#)

Posted: April 4, 2011

Michael Lopresti is facing the biggest decision he's ever made, as his mom, Mary Beth, puts it. A high school senior with hopes of one day becoming a surgeon, Michael followed the traditional college path: He visited campuses, applied to a range of schools—including the [University of Maryland—Baltimore County](#) (for the academics), the [University of Mary Washington](#) (for the campus feel), and the [University of Virginia](#) (for a reach school)—and was accepted to most.

Now, armed with his acceptance letters, Michael has one month to select the college where he plans to spend the next four years, as his parents simultaneously balance supporting his choices with finding a way to foot the accompanying bills. The process is often laden with anxiety, says clinical psychologist Jerry Weichman.

"Very rarely is there going to be a clear cut 'yes' when it comes to making a college decision," says Weichman, who specializes in adolescent counseling in Newport Beach, Calif. "It's a huge commitment and any doubt in their decision process often increases their stress [and] anxiety—and they begin to question whether they're making the right decision or not."

But the selection process doesn't need to be overwhelmingly stressful for students or parents—it can even be fun, experts say. Take a deep breath and use these tips from college officials, coaches, and counselors to [find the right college](#) for you:

1. Revisit your short list: Accepted to more than one of your top choices? That's an enviable position to be in, though it might not feel like it. As you weigh several appealing options, think back to why you applied to each, counselors recommend.

"It's always very key to bring them back to, 'How did you initially identify the schools that were a good fit for you; why did you choose this particular school; and how does this match up against schools B, C, and D on your list?'" says Erika Coplon, director of the College Admissions Coaching program at InsideTrack.

2. Rank your priorities: Make an extended list of pros and cons, Weichman instructs his clients. Identify several aspects of college life—the size of the school, for instance, or the strength of the athletic program—and numerically rank each by importance to you. When "you get a number out of it," he says, "You can see how much more it really weighs on their mind."

3. Go back to school: Students and parents should have no unanswered questions by the time they send their deposit to a school, experts say. While an initial campus visit is a good time to check out the dorms, sample the food, and get a feel for campus life, students and parents should take a list of 10 to 15 additional, in-depth questions with them on a second trip, recommends Bob Roth, college and career coach and author of [College Success: Advice for Parents of High School and College Students](#).

[Use these [8 tips to make the most of a second campus visit](#).]

4. Focus on your endgame: For the Lopresti family, and many others like them, finding a school involves balancing cost, academics, and campus life. Though Mrs. Lopresti admits she is drawn to schools with bustling atmospheres, "my husband, the logical one, would say, 'Think about why you're going, and make the best decision for where you want to be four years from now,'" she says. "Keep your eye on the end: where you want to be in your career [and] where you want to be financially. That has to weigh into it."

Ideally, a high school senior should have at least a vague career path, Roth claims. "In many cases, students go to college not knowing what they want to do," he says. "I think it's extremely important to try to narrow it down before you pick the college. We all know from any early age whether we're good in math and science, whether we're good at business—we have to begin to understand ourselves a little bit better, and I think many students don't take the time to think about that."

5. Delve into the departments: Students and parents may look to [college rankings](#) to help make a decision, but don't forget that academic prestige can be examined on a smaller scale. A school that excels in biology, for example, may have a less regarded history department.

Do some Internet research or reach out directly to faculty members in your prospective department, Roth recommends. Give extra consideration to a school whose faculty members are still actively engaged with employers in a given field, as this can open doors to internships, research opportunities, and jobs, he says.

6. Investigate the job connections: Developing a four-year plan to land a job is easier with a robust campus career services center, a vital tool for students that can differ widely by college, Roth says. Try to glean specifics about job fairs, on-campus interviews, and even the number of students per career counselor at the school.

"How often can [a student] actually get into the career service office to talk to somebody?" Roth recommends asking. "Can they get in there once a semester, or are they going to be lucky to get in there once during the whole four years that they're going to school? You can judge a

college to some degree by the number of career services people: Is the college putting their money in a place that will actually help the students?"

[See how the [job landscape is brightening](#) for college grads.]

7. Compare financial aid packages: Though many schools have yet to release full financial aid offers, parents and students can begin to explore their financial options through free tools like the one offered by [SimpleTuition](#). By inputting tuition and sources of aid, loans, and cash, the tool shows users what a monthly loan payment will look like after graduation at up to three schools simultaneously.

"Colleges with higher sticker prices might actually not be much more expensive on a monthly basis," says Kevin Walker, cofounder of SimpleTuition. "Having those numbers in hand when you make a decision among the schools you're thinking about can be really helpful."

[Explore the *U.S. News* [Paying for College](#) guide.]

8. Compromise: As the deadline nears and tensions rise, students and parents may butt heads over a college decision. "Communication is the key," says Doug Badger, director of admission at [Grinnell College](#). "Students and parents need to sit down and really talk about...the pieces that are serving as roadblocks to some consensus, and step through them piece by piece." In many cases, parents should advise without becoming overbearing or making the student's decision themselves, experts say.

9. Don't take rejection personally: You shouldn't dwell on a rejection letter, even one from a dream school, counselors assert. "It's hard for somebody who has their heart set on something at 17 or 18 years old to find out that they didn't get what they want," Roth, the college coach, acknowledges.

"But all you can do [as a parent] is empathize, sympathize, and try to point out to them that there are other alternatives. There is always another way." An even worse result, counselors say, is letting disappointment stymie the decision you still have to make.

10. Don't procrastinate: May 1 is rapidly approaching. "What you see is: 'It's a difficult decision, so I'm going to put it off,'" InsideTrack's Coplon says. "Start the work now. Spend the next few weeks doing some really serious work to make the right decision."

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QUIZ: ARE YOU A CONTROL FREAK?

April/May 2011
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BY AUDREY D. BRASHICH



Snarky might work for Santana on *Glee*, but the latest studies show that being a glass-half-full girl is where it's at. Here are seven sunny secrets that'll make you want to jump for joy—literally.

We all know that girl: The one who comes into school smiling, laughing and high-fiving her hundreds of friends. You'd almost swear she has cartoon birds singing to her as she walks through the halls. She's just...So. Darn. Cheery. As you slump into the seat next to her, all you can think is: *What does she have that I don't?* The answer? A positive outlook.

We're not just talking about looking on the bright side every so often. This is about having a constant optimistic mind-set and believing in yourself no matter what. Why stay so positive? Experts say maintaining a sunshine-y 'tude will help ya make more friends, do better in school, stay healthy and even get your crush to notice you. Who doesn't want that?

"Looking for the positive in negative situations will help you to be happier in life. If you have that, you'll be less stressed and anxious and you'll perform better in school," says Dr. Jerry Weichman, a teen psychologist in Newport Beach, Calif. "Plus, people are attracted to other people who are positive and give off a good vibe. It's like bugs to a light."

And the best part? Anyone can become a positive person. Says Dr. Weichman, "You don't have to be born optimistic. You can learn." We've got seven tricks to boost your optimism every single day.

Secret #1: Look for silver linings

Fact: Things won't always work the way you want 'em to, but that doesn't mean you've gotta just stand there and take it. "You can't control what happens to you," says Dr. Weichman. "But you *can* control how you respond to what just happened."

Take Madison W., 17. She spent a year learning French for a summer study abroad program in Paris—only to find out it was canceled just before she was to leave. "I was devastated. I cried for a week," she remembers. Once she dried her tears, though, Madison focused on other interesting opportunities.

"I found a day camp for foreign kids that was looking for a counselor who could speak French. I had an amazing couple months and started babysitting for one of the campers. His mom asked me to stay with them in the south of France this summer and be their nanny!"

Madison is a classic example of how optimists forge ahead, despite obstacles. That bit about "when one door closes, another opens"? Optimists believe it...and act on it.

“Take charge of your own happiness. You have the power to steer your life in a positive, meaningful direction.”

Secret #2: Fake it 'til you make it

Another old cliché that's actually true: "Life doesn't give you more than you can take," says Dr. Weichman. "So when things get tough, you have to get tougher."

When a bully targeted Jamie I., 15, she did everything she could to avoid letting the tormentor rule her life. She joined new activities outside of school and found new friends. She even helped local legislators pass two anti-bullying laws.

"I just refused to let it get to me and acted like it wasn't bothering me as much as it was," says Jamie. Because Jamie *believed* she was capable of triumphing over her tough school sitch, she *did*. Sometimes you've gotta fake a "can do" spirit until things fall into place. Because, trust us, they will.

Secret #3: Get moving

Daily exercise is key to a positive attitude. "There is almost nothing that comes close to what an hour of cardio can do to relieve stress," says Dr. Weichman. That's because working out releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good hormones, making it way easier to feel like Little Miss Sunshine.

It works for Maliana N., 15. "When I get home from school, I take my dog for a run. I go from feeling completely overwhelmed to almost forgetting about whatever was getting me down," she shares. You'll up your attitude fast and make your furry friend's tail wag with joy. Awesome.

Secret #4: Live in the present

Things that happened even a second ago are now the past. So why dwell? Studies show that when people think about disap-

pointments over and over, their mood darkens considerably. Even worse? They become more pessimistic about the future—and less likely to take action.

This happened to Julie T., 14, last year when she was a freshman. "I always was really confident," Julie recalls. "Then I hit high school and suddenly felt super awkward." As her always-friendly personality faded, Julie became almost paralyzed by anxiety. "I'd wonder if people were silently judging me. I'd keep thinking about what I did or said in

certain situations with friends or guys a month after it happened. My mind would keep replaying the scenes, and I'd get anxious all over again, wondering if I came off 'cool' enough."

Julie finally confessed to her parents what was going on. With the help of a therapist, Julie learned to stop getting lost in negative thoughts and eventually reconnected with the friends she'd always had around her.

"You'll find the most peace in your life when you stay in the present," explains Dr. Weichman. "So focus on what you can see, feel, touch and hear around you." What to do with those negative, creeping thoughts? Say it with us: Let. Them. Go.

Secret #5: Choose your crew carefully

Sure, you wanna be there when your girls need ya. But if things are stressful in your life (think: tryouts, tests, big events), now's not the best time to deal with negative energy, too.

"Research shows that, almost like a cold, you can 'catch' stress from people around you," says Mary Miller, a therapist for teens in upstate New York.

Jenn F., 14, has been mindful of who she surrounds herself with since her mom pointed out how relaxed she seemed after chilling with certain chicas. "I feel really bad for admitting this," Jenn confesses, "but I have certain friends I avoid when I have something major coming up. I just can't always handle their drama on top of mine."

Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project*, thinks Jenn's policy of hanging out with sunny hunnies is smart.

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3 more easy ways to see the world through rose-colored glasses



TRY SOMETHING NEW.

Optimists get a boost from fresh challenges. Try hiking a nearby trail, taking on your bro in Scrabble or getting some spicy beef instead of sweet 'n' sour chicken.

JUST SMILE. Feeling down? When you walk to class,

smile and say hey to a friend in the hallway. Chances are, they'll give ya a smile right back, lifting your mood.

DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP.

When you suffer a setback, think about all the factors that could've contributed to your performance. Failed a pop

quiz? Consider whether there's another reason you struggled. Is this a teacher who usually doesn't dole out pop quizzes? Was it your third test of the day? Did you stay up too late last night? Instead of spiraling, resolve to learn from the experience and then move on.

Fashion Shopping Guide

Here's where to find the clothing pictured on pages 22, 24, 28-32 and 60-67. All other credits are listed on the page.

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"Simply put, positive people make other people feel more positive," she says.

Secret #6: Set yourself up for success

Racking up some wins is a great way to build your confidence. But forget about going big or going home.

Taylor S., 12, has a powerhouse voice and dreams of singing in a nationally ranked show choir in her city. But before shooting for the big leagues, she decided to hone her skills in her school chorus.

"It's hard to get right into [the show choir]," Taylor says. "And I knew I had a lot to learn about technique." Experts say that taking baby steps is the best way to eventually nab that big dream—and stay positive in the process.

"By setting realistic and achievable goals, you can avoid major letdowns that might unleash your inner pessimist," explains Dr. Elizabeth Lombardo, author of *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*. "Every small step means you're headed in the right direction. And you can use the positivity from your small victories to help get you to where you really want to be."

Secret #7: Count your blessings

Ultimately, what is being an optimist truly about? Seeing the good in your life. When so much is thrown at you every day (parents with huge expectations, coaches wanting more and more out of you, catty comments in the halls), it's easy to feel like life's just too tough. But, we promise, it really isn't.

Daniela S., 15, recognized this up close when she traveled to Haiti to volunteer after last year's earthquake.

"Kids at my school actually have it pretty good, but they're always sweating the small stuff," Daniela says. "The children in Haiti have nothing and yet they're constantly smiling. I'm now trying to be like that, too."

Bottom line? Rocking an optimistic attitude is a choice. "Take charge of your own happiness," suggests Gretchen. "You have the power to steer your life in a positive, meaningful direction." ✿



Print Close

Is Bulletstorm the Worst Video Game in the World?

By John Brandon

Published February 08, 2011 | FoxNews.com

Parents had better beware: There's a Bulletstorm on the horizon.

In the new video game Bulletstorm due February 22, players are rewarded for shooting enemies in the private parts (such as the buttocks). There's an excess of profanity, of course, including frequent use of F-words. And Bulletstorm is particularly gruesome, with body parts that explode all over the screen.

But that's not the worst part.

The in-game awards system, called Skill Shots, ties the ugly, graphic violence into explicit sex acts: "topless" means cutting a player in half, while a "gang bang" means killing multiple enemies. And with kids as young as 9 playing such games, the experts FoxNews.com spoke with were nearly universally worried that video game violence may be reaching a fever pitch.

"If a younger kid experiences Bulletstorm's explicit language and violence, the damage could be significant," Dr. Jerry Weichman, a clinical psychologist at the Hoag Neurosciences Institute in Southern California, told FoxNews.com.

"Violent video games like Bulletstorm have the potential to send the message that violence and insults with sexual innuendos are the way to handle disputes and problems," Weichman said.

Carole Lieberman, a psychiatrist and book author, told FoxNews.com that sexual situations and acts in video games -- highlighted so well in Bulletstorm -- have led to real-world sexual violence.

"The increase in rapes can be attributed in large part to the playing out of [sexual] scenes in video games," she said.

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), rates all video games as a guide for parents; each game carries a letter-label at retail (T for Teen, M for Mature) and an online-only summary. Lieberman and others say it's useless, because it isn't enforced at retail.

Video game advocates say the existing warning system works fine: Parents are responsible for deciding whether their kids can play games, not the government. Epic, the game developer, did not respond to FoxNews.com's requests. But game publisher Electronic Arts released the following statement: "Bulletstorm has been given an "M" rating by the ESRB, and we have adhered to all their guidelines in regards to the marketing and promotion of Bulletstorm."

More important, defenders argue that games with excessive violence and sexual content simply don't sell well.

"Games without sufficient quality of gameplay -- games that include highly objectionable violent or sexual content -- often pump up the level of this kind of content to gain media attention. This tactic typically fails, as can be seen in the poor sales performance of titles such as BMX XXX and Postal," said Billy Pidgeon, a video game analyst with M2 Research.

The most common response is that, in the U.S., game makers have the right to produce violent content. If the government restricts games they would have to further restrict all media.

Penalizing store clerks

There might be a simple way to address the problem: penalties for selling violent games to kids.

This year, the Supreme Court will make a landmark decision about video-game violence. A California law now makes it illegal for a merchant to sell a Mature-rated game to a minor; the law imposes a \$1,000 fine. But the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) has sued to overturn the law.

"Between a great ratings system, parental controls on the consoles and the major retailers inhibiting the sale of Mature-rated games to minors, the matter is really one for parents and adults to consider, individually," Hal Halpin, the president of the similar Entertainment Consumers Association, told FoxNews.com. "I respect the creative rights of game developers to make a game like Bulletstorm in the same way that I appreciate Quentin Tarantino's right to make over-the-top movies like Kill Bill."



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Melanie Killen, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Maryland who has pushed for laws that govern the sale of video games, disagrees that the ESRB rating system is working. She says 9-year-olds are playing games like Bulletstorm and that there is no real enforcement. The FCC monitors all TV broadcasts and stiffly fines broadcasters for violating decency rules, yet there are no penalties in place for retailers who sell violent games to kids.

"The marketing is clearly aimed at children and young adolescents," Killen said. "Politicians were organizing efforts to address violent video games prior to the presidential election but got distracted by the election. It is time for senators and representatives to come back to the issue."

Are the warnings enough?

To be fair, the online-only ESRB warning for Bulletstorm does spell out the objectionable content -- and even *that* is too graphic to reproduce entirely. Here's an excerpt:

The dialogue contains numerous jokes and comments that reference sexual acts, venereal diseases, and having sex with one's mother (e.g., "Guess I know where the ol' gal got that limp."). The names of some Skillshots are infused with sexual innuendo (e.g., Gag Reflex, Rear Entry, Drilldo, Mile High Club); one Skillshot (i.e., Fire in the Hole) allows players to shoot at enemies' exposed buttocks."

Video game publishers traditionally stay glib about the issue of violence. Microsoft, maker of the Xbox 360 console, declined to comment. Epic Games did not respond to requests, and the developer did not respond. Remi Sklar, the vice president of Public Relations at Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, which makes numerous video games (though is unconnected to Bulletstorm), offered the following statement: "We don't have a comment for that story."

In the end, those who don't see a problem with Bulletstorm praise the game for being innovative.

"One thing that tends to be ignored is that if Bulletstorm consisted solely of beating people up, it wouldn't be fun to play," said Hal Levy with the National Youth Rights Association.

"It's been praised for encouraging innovative thinking. Bulletstorm involves developing new moves and dispatching of enemies creatively. Plenty of emotionally unstable adults will play the game and they'll be fine," he said.

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Bullying, Cyber and Otherwise, Why Won't It Go Away?

"Wolf Pack" – Latest Incident

Difference in Bullying Between Boys and Girls

Newport Beach, CA – February 9, 2011 – What is it about our culture that's causing the current wave of adolescent bullying? High school has always been "the ins" vs. "the outs," but that seldom led to the prevalence and depth of emotional and physical bullying we now hear about nearly every week. Is it the Internet, poor parenting, violence on television and movies, social media, video games or something else?

The schools seem unable to stop it and **the warning signs of bullying must be subtle because most parents of victims are shocked to learn that their child is being singled out for attack.** The recent "Wolf Pack" story, where six 17-year-olds attacked a small boy on the way home from school, is just the latest incident...videotaped by the teen perpetrators for the world to see. And we all know about cyber bullying incidents resulting in teen suicides.

Dr. Jerry Weichman is a psychologist who specializes in teen issues--especially bullying- --and is on the Board of Directors for the Bullying Prevention Initiative for the State of California. He is a fantastic source of information for all teen-related issues, including Substance Abuse, Violence, Cyber Bullies, Sexting, Teen Depression, Eating Disorders, Anxiety, Academic Performance, Body Image Issues, Relationships, Sex, Social Dramas and more. Dr. Jerry is the author of a teen self-help book called "How to Deal." He looks more like a teen and talks like them than you would think of a traditional anti-bullying psychologist.

"There are four kinds of teen bullying," said Dr. Jerry, known as the "Teen Decoder" by parents of his adolescent clinical patients at the Hoag Neurosciences Institute in Southern California. "The "Wolf Pack" incident is a vivid example of physical bullying, the easiest for parents and teachers to spot, but verbal, indirect and cyber bullying can do just as much or more harm to teen victims," he said.

There is a marked **difference between boys and girls bullying** their victims. Girls will isolate another girl from "the ins" by turning their back to her, not inviting her to social events and intimidating others who talk to her. Boys are more prone to physical violence but don't shy away from spreading rumors by using social media.

Dr. Jerry, a camera-friendly, hip young psychologist who is not that far removed in age from his teen patients, has developed what he calls a "tool box for teens" to help them and their parents overcome these and other common challenges of growing up in our connected world.

Tips Parents Need to Know:

- **Look for any sudden change in your child's normal routine. Are they abruptly changing things that they typically do?**
- **Is your teen exhibiting new aggressiveness towards siblings or pets? Bullied children often repeat the cycle.**
- **Observe your teen's sleeping patterns. Are they suddenly sleeping more or less than usual?**
- **Has your child had a sudden drop in grades?**

To arrange an interview with Dr. Jerry please contact Debbie Douglas at 949-464-9301 or debbie@douglasstrategic.com.

###

Legal and Lethal

Tucson Shooter Got High on Salvia...Legally

Miley Cyrus Got High on Salvia Legally Too– Is Your Teen Next?

Abuse of Legal Substances on Rise

Editor's Note: Psychologist Dr. Jerry Weichman , expert on adolescent substance abuse, available to comment

Newport Beach, California – The Internet, smart phones and teens' endless search for self-acceptance in their technology connected yet isolated world is driving a revival of substance abuse of salvia, an herb from flower seeds that induces psychedelic effects but is not detectable with usual drug tests, and synthetic cannabis, a psychoactive herbal and chemical concoction, also undetectable, popularly known around high schools as "spice". You've most recently heard about Miley Cyrus' Youtube video abusing salvia. And supposedly, Jared Loughner, the disturbed young man who allegedly shot the Arizona Congressional woman has used salvia.

Law enforcement agencies, usually behind the curve when it comes to designer drugs, are just waking up to these dangerous gateways to teen addiction. Fifteen states have outlawed salvia sales, but in most states, it's perfectly legal, and "spice" ingredients are readily and legally available on the Internet too. Legal substances or illegal substances, the consequences of young people abusing these substances range from unfortunate to tragic.

Here's a sampling of what young people are experiencing by abusing these all too legal substances:

SALVIA

One saw the floor moving like waves, couldn't walk, had to lay down

One went catatonic and started drooling

Another saw the faces of his friend on all the oranges of an orange tree

Another thought the commercial he was watching was coming out of the TV at him, flipped the couch over and hid

"SPICE"

One reported severe chest pain

One reported pain while urinating

Another felt high but very stupid and confused

Dr. Jerry Weichman, a licensed psychologist, is an adolescent specialist, author, speaker and parenting expert. His clinical practice at Hoag Neurosciences Institute in Newport Beach provides a window on contemporary teen and pre-teen behavior. “Dr. Jerry” as his adolescent patients call him, is a young Ph.D. who really relates to teens, speaks their lingo and has felt their pain. Their parents call him **“The Decoder”** because he explains the challenges teens face every day, facilitating practical family problem solving.

“Today’s teens need to be armed with a ‘tool box’ of coping mechanisms and practical solutions for the challenges they all face. Success is learning to use these tools to achieve self-acceptance,” said Jerry Weichman, Ph.D.

Dr. Weichman grew up without a right foot and had to learn to walk with a prosthetic leg. Being teased, developing body image issues, having social acceptance problems in school, experiencing lack of motivation, academic problems and severe depression forced him to transform himself in high school. He overcame all these challenges, ultimately received academic and athletic honors in high school, played Division I football in college and earned his Ph.D. by the age of 26. Dr. Jerry can speak on:

- **Warning signs of teen substance abuse**
- **Decreasing age of substance users and abusers**
- **How users become pushers**
- **Where they hide it and how to find it**
- **Substance Abuse, Violence, Cyber Bullies, Sexting, Teen Depression, Eating Disorders, Anxiety, Academic Performance, Body Image Issues, Relationships, Sex, Social Dramas and more.**

To interview Dr. Jerry Weichman contact Debbie Douglas (949) 464-9301 or debbie@douglasstrategic.com

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