

# 5 STUDENT SUCCESS SHIFTS



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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY THIS LITTLE PDF MATTERS

College doesn't come with an instruction manual, but it does come with choices.

Every day, students are choosing how to use their time, energy, and attention.

This short guide is designed to help students make **five simple mindset shifts** that:

- Reduce stress
- Increase focus
- Make it more likely they'll stay, succeed, and graduate!

**You can use this PDF in:**

- First-year seminars or college success courses
- TRIO / GEAR UP / bridge programs
- High school college & career readiness classes
- Leadership programs and organizations

Encourage students to circle **1–2 shifts** they want to apply this week.

## SHIFT #1

# FROM “I’M ON MY OWN” → “I’M ALLOWED TO GET HELP”

College can feel like, *“If I ask for help, I’m failing.”*

In reality, the strongest students use campus resources early and often.

### New Mindset:

*“Successful students don’t do it alone. Asking for help is a smart move, not a weak move.”*

### Try this:

- Visit one campus resource this week (tutoring center, writing center, advising, TRIO, etc.).
- Ask: “What’s one thing you wish more students knew about this office?”

### Reflection Questions

- Who are 2–3 people or offices I can reach out to when I’m stuck?
- What’s one class where I could use extra support **before** I fall behind?

## SHIFT #2

# FROM “I’LL DO IT LATER” → “I’LL GIVE IT 10 MINUTES NOW”

Procrastination isn’t always laziness; it’s often **overwhelm**.

When a task feels huge, our brain says, “*Later.*”

### New Mindset:

*“I don’t have to finish it all today. I just need to start for 10 minutes.”*

### Try this:

- Pick one important task (reading, paper, study guide).
- Set a timer for 10 minutes and work on just that—no phone, no multitasking.
- When the timer ends, decide: **stop or do another 10 minutes.**

### Reflection Questions

- What assignment am I avoiding right now?
- What’s a 10-minute version of that task I can do today?

## SHIFT #3

# FROM “I HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING” → “I HAVE TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS”

Students often feel busy but not productive.

They say yes to everything and then feel exhausted.

### New Mindset:

*“Not everything is urgent. My time and energy are limited, so I’ll focus on what matters most.”*

### Try this 3-level list:

1. **Must Do Today** – 1–3 things that move you closer to passing your classes / staying enrolled.
2. **Should Do Soon** – things that can wait a day or two.
3. **Nice If Done** – extras (scrolling, gaming, side tasks).

### Reflection Questions

- What are my top **3 priorities** this week for school?
- Is there something I need to **say no** to so I can protect my goals?

## SHIFT #4

# FROM “I’M NOT A ‘SCHOOL PERSON’” → “I CAN GROW INTO THIS”

Many students carry old stories:

*“I’m bad at math.” “I’m not a reader.” “School just isn’t my thing.”*

Those stories might be **old** and no longer true.

### New Mindset:

*“Skills can grow. I may not be great at this **yet**, but I can improve with practice and support.”*

### Try this:

- Add the word “**yet**” to your negative thoughts:
  - “I don’t understand this chapter... **yet**.”
  - “I’m not confident speaking in class... **yet**.”
- Ask your instructor: “What’s one thing you recommend for students who struggle in this class?”

### Reflection Questions

- What’s one area where I’ve already grown more than I give myself credit for?
- Where can I replace “I can’t” with “I can’t... yet”?

## SHIFT #5

# FROM “THIS IS JUST ABOUT GRADES” → “THIS IS ABOUT MY FUTURE STORY”

Grades matter, but they’re not the whole story.

College is also about who you’re becoming—your habits, confidence, and sense of purpose.

### New Mindset:

*“I’m not just earning credits. I’m building the story I’ll tell about my life.”*

### Try this:

- Write one sentence that starts with:
- “I want my college story to be about...”
- Keep it where you can see it—on your wall, phone, or notebook.

### Reflection Questions

- If I meet my future self 5 years from now, what would they thank me for doing **this semester**?
- What kind of example do I want to set for my family, friends, or community?

# HOW TO USE THIS PDF

- Share it during orientation, bridge programs, or leadership retreats.
- Use it as a **discussion starter** in class or workshops.
- Ask students to pick **one shift** to practice this week and report back.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tawan Perry, M.Ed., is an award-winning author, internationally respected leadership expert, and one of the most sought-after speakers for colleges and organizations nationwide. His dynamic programs have empowered audiences of all backgrounds, and his work has been featured in magazines, television programs, and major media outlets. Known for his engaging, practical approach, Tawan helps students and professionals transform potential into measurable success.

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