

TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR STUDENT

A resource for parents and families.



You can make a difference

Talking about sex, drugs, and relationships might not be easy, but it's important. Parents and families play a critical role in students' decision-making. This resource contains tips and tools to engage your student in conversations about topics they will discover in the online training *What Would Brandeis Do? Supporting Community Health and Safety*.



Set Aside Time to Talk

Pick a time when you and your student are both able to fully engage in conversation and are not distracted. Plan time for you and your student to reflect on the conversations, revisiting them as needed. Periodically reach out to your student, especially in their first few weeks of transitioning to college.



Ask Open-Ended Questions

Begin an open and ongoing dialogue with your student. Start by asking about their opinions. If you show respect for your student's viewpoint, they will be more likely to listen to and respect yours. If you begin to feel frustrated or disappointed with your student's answers, keep calm and try to acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.



Frame Your Own Story

It is likely that your student will ask you about your own experiences with these subjects, so you may want to think about what you'll share and how. Being honest about your experience—the good, the bad, and what you've learned from it—can be a powerful learning opportunity for your student.

Did You Know?

73% of Brandeis first-year students have not drunk alcohol in the last 30 days.

87% of Brandeis first-year students have not used cannabis in the last 30 days.

Source: *What Would Brandeis Do?* Questionnaire, Fall 2020

Not all students, drink, use drugs, or have relationships in college. Media often portrays college as full of parties and wild nights, but that's the exception rather than the norm. Engage with your student about what other possibilities they may encounter in their time at Brandeis.

HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES

For Alcohol

- Set a limit and stick to it. Count your drinks.
- Stick to wine and beer. Avoid hard liquor (especially shots).
- Space and pace your drinks. Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Eat a good meal before and while drinking.
- Have a plan for transportation.
- Stay with the same group of friends all night and look out for one another.
- Do not mix alcohol with other drugs, including cannabis.

For Cannabis

- Avoid cannabis use the day or two before important events (like class).
- Take breaks (days, weeks, or months) from using.
- Avoid highly concentrated THC products like vape oils, wax, butter, and others.
- Remember that edibles can take 1-2 hours to kick in.
- Do not drive for 4-6 hours after using.
- Pay attention to any changes to your academics and your social and emotional well-being.

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

A bystander is someone who witnesses or observes acts or situations that create the potential for violence or danger. While they may not be directly involved in the situation, they are present and in a position to discourage or prevent an incident of potential violence or abuse. Your student will learn 5 methods of intervention. They have the option to:

1. **DIRECTLY** ask what is going on;
2. **DISTANCE** the people involved in the conflict;
3. **DELEGATE** roles and responsibilities to other bystanders or authorities;
4. **DISTRACT** the aggressor;
5. and **DOCUMENT** the incident.

CONSENT

Your student will learn that “consent between two or more people is defined as an affirmative agreement—through clear actions or words—to engage in an activity, such as going on a date, making out, or having sex.”

1. Consent is informed, knowing, and voluntary.
2. Consent is active, not passive.
3. Silence, in and of itself, cannot be interpreted as consent.
Only yes means yes.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The five keys to a healthy relationship:

- **RESPECT:** Promote and model healthy attitudes towards yourself, partners, and peers.
- **LEARN:** Access credible information and resources to promote overall health.
- **EMPOWER:** Everyone has the right to set limits, feel safe, and get support. Encourage those feelings in yourself, partners, and peers.
- **CONSENT:** Seek mutual agreement without fear or pressure. Only yes means yes.
- **COMMUNICATE:** Express yourself to partners, peers, and family openly. Expectations and needs should be clearly conveyed.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- * “How do you see alcohol or cannabis playing into your college experience?”
- * “Have you thought about how alcohol and cannabis might affect your academic goals?”
- * “What safety strategies will you use if you do choose to drink or smoke?”
- * “How could you help a friend who has had too much to drink?”
- * “Have you thought about what dating in college will be like?”
- * “Have you learned about affirmative consent in school?”
- * “Do you know the signs of a healthy relationship? Do you think you could recognize an unhealthy relationship?”
- * “Do you feel comfortable and confident in your ability to step in and be a prosocial bystander?”

This resource was created by the Brandeis Office of Health & Wellness Promotion (HAWP) and the Prevention, Advocacy, & Resource Center (PARC). Visit www.brandeis.edu/families for more information about supporting your student.