

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR COLLEGE STUDENTS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS?

Have you heard that drinking in college is a rite of passage with its most serious consequence being a nasty hangover?

Or that parents lose all power to influence once their child enters college? Or that "everyone" drinks heavily in college?

Students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members tend to overestimate alcohol use in college in general, as well as at LBSU. You may be surprised to know that LBSU's rates of alcohol use are below the national average! It is important that you, as a parent, do not accept heavy drinking as "normal" and something that you cannot impact. You are a vital source of influence and an important partner in our comprehensive approach to alcohol and other drug use on campus. Every experience at LBSU is educational, whether that experience happens inside or outside of the classroom.

Research has shown that open, two-way communication between parents and their students can greatly reduce students' heavy drinking.

The first weeks of the semester of college are critical to the academic success of a new student. Because heavy alcohol use and drug use can complicate and negatively affect a student's transition, it is an important time to begin talking with your student about the consequences of alcohol and other drug use. We also recommend continuing to have conversations periodically throughout the year.

The information in the pamphlet is provided to assist you in talking with your student as he or she begins this critical new phase of life as a student at Long Beach State University to talk to your college students about alcohol and drugs

OTHER DRUGS

While alcohol is the most commonly abused substance on college campuses, other drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy/molly are present at colleges across the nation. Each drug has its own particular effect on the body and poses its own unique risks, in addition to the possibility of developing dependence. Marijuana has been shown to cause impairments that make driving hazardous. Both cocaine & ecstasy can cause organ damage and pose overdose or reaction risks that can be fatal.

CANNABIS/ MARIJUANA

The State of California has made cannabis (marijuana) legal for adults 21 and over, and for medical use. There remain restrictions on use in public, impaired driving and unlicensed sales. LBSU, like all universities that accept Federal funds, continues to prohibit the possession and use of cannabis on University property (including residence halls), and in connection with any University-sponsored or sanctioned activity. This applies to any use of cannabis (adult & medical use).

Even with the change in legal status, the majority of LBSU students do not use cannabis. And those that do tend to report very infrequently use. This is important, because recent research tells us that college

students who use cannabis are more likely to have gaps in their enrollment and, at times, not complete their degrees.

Speaking to your student about the laws and LBSU policies around cannabis can help assure they are not confused by the state's legal status. Set out your expectations about cannabis use, and let them know that there can be negative effects. Help them understand the actual rates of use LBSU. Most students have never used other drugs

It is important that students know that while they may feel pressured to use illegal drugs, most students resist and avoid any use.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

There's no question that our nation is experiencing a growing problem with prescription drug abuse. This problem extends well beyond college campuses and includes high school age youth as well as adults. Pain medications, muscle relaxants, and stimulants are among those being abused. Whether they are used to get high, to recover from a bad night, or a study aid, use of these medicines can lead to serious medical consequences. Medicines are placed under prescription controls because the medical community has identified significant, possibly life-threatening effects if care is not taken in how they are administered.

Students who take prescription drugs without a valid prescription are at heightened risk for developing dependency. Also, these medication can be very dangerous when mixed with other drugs or alcohol; fatal consequences can occur. Overdose is also a serious risk and lead to deaths. Again, though about 90 percent of LBSU have not used a drug like OxyContin, Ritalin, Adderall or Vicodin without a prescription, the consequences of such use can be so harmful that it is important students are told that just because something is a medicine doesn't mean it is safe.

COLLEGE DRINKING

There are many stereotypes of the college student; sadly, one stereotype is the heavy drinker. Though most students do not engage in the type of frequent, heavy drinking characterized in popular media, research does tell us that a substantial minority does. In fact, nationally about 40 percent of college students report a recent episode of drinking five or more drinks in one sitting.

Such drinking causes consequences; more than 1,800 college students die each year in alcohol-related incidents. Most of those deaths stem from vehicle crashes. Another 500,000 are injured from alcohol-related incidents. We alcohol know that alcohol is often present when instances of sexual assault and fights occur, and is also associated with academic problems some students experience.

There are legal consequences to consider as well. Since most college students in the U.S are under the age of 21, possession and consumption of alcohol may place the student at risk for arrest or citation. Driving drunk also can e a costly mistake, with fines and driving restrictions common penalties for DUIs across the nation.

At LBSU, we are fortunate to have a lower rate of heavy drinking than the national average. About 70 percent of our students report no recent episodes of heavy drinking. However, that is not to say that alcohol is not a serious problem for some of our students. Sadly, we have experienced some tragic

consequences of alcohol abuse. Heavy drinking at parties, especially in the neighborhood around campus, has also led to conflict between our students and campus neighbors. Noise violations, vandalism and disruptive behavior are serious concerns tied to alcohol use among our students.

Why should I talk to my student about alcohol and drugs?

Your lifelong relationship with your student means that you have tremendous influence over the decisions he or she makes. This influence will continue even after your student has started college. Even though he or she is on the brink of adulthood, your college-bound student still looks to you for guidance and support. You are a primary influence in your student's life and can create healthy and realistic expectations about behaviors around the use of alcohol and other drugs. We encourage you to talk with your students about your expectations regarding drug and alcohol use and to continue the dialogue throughout their time at LBSU. Although students may not bring up the topic, we encourage you to address it, as research shows that parents influence students' alcohol-related beliefs.

When should I talk to my student about alcohol and drugs?

The conversations should start now! Transitioning to college can be stressful. Your student will be adjusting to a new environment, new social situations, and will have new opportunities to make healthy decisions. Be proactive and talk to them about the difficult decisions they will have to make when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. New college students are often homesick and can be easily influenced by others. Having conversations about alcohol and drugs before they leave home helps prepare students to make positive decisions.

How do I start a conversation about alcohol & other drugs?

SETTING THE TONE

- Be prepared to establish an ongoing conversation, not a onetime speech.
- Evaluate and be willing to articulate your own views about alcohol and other drug use
- Avoid contradictions between your words and your actions. Exchange information face to face if possible, but also call, email or text message your student.
- Make it your family's goal to talk openly and honestly about these topics.
- Listen to your student in a non-judgmental manner. Keep an open mind and remain calm even if your student asks you questions or tells to about a situation that shocks you. Be careful not to judge or express anger about small "behavior lapses" -- if your student feels you disapprove, he or she may not feel comfortable sharing with you in the future.
- Allow your student to express fears and concerns without your interruption. By putting your emotions aside and listening, you may learn a lot that will help you guide your student.

WHAT TO ASK

- Ask often about academics, roommates, and your student's social/leisure time activities, and drinking and social behavior of roommates and friends. While your student might hesitate to

talk about their own behaviors, talking about their friends will open the door for you to have conversations about healthy behavior.

- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer. If there is something that you want to know, ask.

What should I say (or not say) about alcohol & other drugs?

SETTING THE TONE

- Prior to leaving for college and during the first six weeks, create hypothetical situations: How would you handle it if your roommate drinks too much? What would you do if you found someone passed out? What if someone offers you a drink and you do not know what is in it? How will you ensure that you are safe?
- Clearly state your expectations with regard to alcohol. Expand the conversation to include academic success, personal safety, sexual activity, and drugs other than alcohol.
- Stress to your student the importance of looking out for others and knowing when to get help. Know the signs of alcohol poisoning and that it can be fatal.
- Know that mixing alcohol with other drugs may intensify these effects
- Inappropriate use of alcohol and other drugs is often a sign of deeper issues; don't be afraid to ask your student what is going on.
- If they are having a problem with alcohol or drugs, be prepared to refer them to resources on campus. Be familiar and encourage your student to discuss the problem with the appropriate staff member and/or resource available on campus.

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- Avoid telling tales of drinking exploits from your own college years. Entertaining your student with stories of drinking in the day" just makes it sound lie "everyone does it".
- The "I'm your parent and I have a right to know" questions can be frustrating for your student. Its a good idea to talk about communication guidelines ahead of time to establish expectations on which you can all agree
- Do not be overly alarmed about emotional phone calls or letters . After unloading problems, students usually feel better. Serve as a sounding board for your student nd do not overreact to all problems. If problems are serious or out of character, resources for students and parents are available on campus.

Who can help me talk to my student about alcohol and drugs?

Refer to the resource section on the back cover of this pamphlet for guidance when needing assistance for your student with alcohol or other drugs. Resources are also available to assist parents whose student might have a problem with alcohol or other drugs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

If you would like more information about student alcohol and drug use, you may contact the following LBSU offices:

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS):

(562)985-4001

<http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/students/caps>

Wellness & Health Promotion

(562)985-4609

<https://www.csulb.edu/owhp>

LBSU Fraternity & Sorority Life

(562)985-4181

http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student_organizations/fas

Housing & Residential Life

(562)985-4187

www.csulb.edu/divisions/students/housing

USEFUL WEB LINKS:

Long Beach Health & Human Services

<http://www.longbeach.gov/health>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

The Alcohol eCHECKUP TO GO

<http://www.lbsu.edu/e-chug>

The Marijuana eCHECKUP TO GO

<http://www.lbsu.edu/e-toke>