



a newsletter for parents & families



February 2016

## Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month:

- Difficulty getting into study mode
- Things become routine... school finally becomes home
- Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
- Cabin fever and burnout
- Valentine's Day depression if not dating
- Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety
- Spring break planning underway
- Sophomores facing decisions about declaring a major

## Tackling the February To-Do List

Now that students are back to classes and activities, this shortest month of the year provides quite a long list of To Do tasks. Here are some of the big things that may be on your student's mind...

### Doing Well Academically.

February is a key time for students to hunker down and keep up with their studies to start off right. They may need to visit instructors during office hours, find new places to study and put more time in to make this an academically successful term.

**Finding a Summer Job/ Internship.** In just a few short months, summer will be here. And students need to plan now in order to make the most of this time. Talking with career services, advisors, alumni, people at home and more can help them land summer jobs or internships that will provide experience and, hopefully, a paycheck.

**Planning for Spring Break.** How will your student spend this time off? Searching for jobs? Working? Doing service? Making a plan now is key instead of just waiting to see what happens.

**Declaring a Major.** Sophomores likely need to declare a major by the end of the academic



year, if they haven't already done so. This will involve introspection, talking with trusted others and identifying how they want to spend their time.

**Figuring Where to Live.** On-campus or off-campus? Encourage students to find out when the housing process takes place so they can consider all possibilities. Locking down their 2016-2017 housing now will remove the anxiety and cost of doing things at the last minute.

These are just a few of the To Do list entries facing your student this month. Talk with her about what other things are on her list and let her know you're there to talk through options and approaches as she tackles these important tasks.



# Being an Effective Bystander

“The goal of bystander prevention strategies is to change social norms supporting sexual violence and empower men and women to intervene with peers to prevent an assault from occurring,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1/2/14).

It’s everyone’s responsibility to help out. Many of the methods – both proactive and reactive – are often fairly simple, such as employing a distraction to get a friend away from a predator. You can help your student feel more comfortable speaking up and taking positive action by sharing these simple tips about how to be an effective bystander...

1. Work to create an environment where sexual violence is unacceptable – and say it out loud
2. Treat all people with respect
3. Speak up when you hear people making statements that blame victims
4. Encourage friends to trust their instincts – and trust your own gut, too
5. Be a knowledgeable resource for survivors of sexual violence
6. Don’t laugh at sexist jokes or comments – and consider saying something
7. Look out for friends at parties and bars
8. Educate yourself and your friends
9. Use campus resources
10. Attend awareness events
11. Empower survivors to tell their stories
12. Talk openly with friends about sexual violence and how to confront it so it’s not a taboo subject

13. Understand what consent is all about – if someone doesn’t or can’t agree to sex, it’s sexual assault
14. Create a distraction or draw attention in a bad situation (see box)
15. Get help from a friend, bartender, bouncer, RA, host, student leader or other trusted person to intervene
16. Directly ask someone who looks like they need help if they are okay
17. If someone seems too intoxicated to consent, get help separating him/her from a potential perpetrator
18. If you hear someone talking about “targeting” an individual at a party or actually cornering that person, recognize the danger signs and get help



19. Don’t ever blame a victim
20. If you see something, say or do *something*

**Sources:** Some tips adapted from “It’s On Us” at <http://itsonus.org/#tools>; “What Can I Do?” Prevention Innovations, UNH, [www.unh.edu/preventioninnovations/](http://www.unh.edu/preventioninnovations/); The Transformation Project/Green Dot, The University of Tennessee Chattanooga, [www.utc.edu/Outreach/TransformationProject/greendot.php](http://www.utc.edu/Outreach/TransformationProject/greendot.php)

## 12 Ways to Provide a Distraction

As an active bystander, students can provide a simple distraction to help in a situation where sexual violence could possibly happen to someone else.

1. Spill a drink
2. Turn off the music
3. Say something loudly like “Are the cops here?”
4. Tug on your friend’s arm insistently
5. Tell the potential perpetrator, “Your car is being towed!”
6. Pull your friend away, saying desperately, “I need to talk to you NOW!”
7. Do a silly, attention-grabbing dance
8. Interrupt the conversation between the potential victim and perpetrator
9. Ask where the bathroom is
10. Separate the two by saying, “Can you show me where the drinks are?”
11. Call your friend’s cell multiple times
12. Say, “Oh, I’m so glad I found you – we need to leave” and pull that person away matter-of-factly



# Talking about Dating Violence

As we approach Valentine’s Day, a relationship reality is that some college students are experiencing the terrifying, intimidating effects of dating violence. This is a type of intimate partner violence that occurs between two people in a close relationship. The nature of dating violence can be physical, emotional or sexual.

The **physical** impacts occur when a partner is:

- Pinched
- Slapped
- Hit
- Punched
- Shoved
- Kicked

The **psychological/emotional** impacts occur when someone threatens a partner or harms his/her sense of self-worth by:

- Name calling
- Shaming
- Bullying
- Embarrassing on purpose
- Keeping him/her away from friends and family

## Warning Signs of Abuse

- Asking permission to see family or friends
- Asking permission to do something without your partner
- Apologizing for your behavior so your partner won’t get as upset
- Drastically lessening the time you spend with family and friends
- Having your partner resent you spending time with family and friends
- Being embarrassed by your partner with put-downs
- Having your partner threaten to harm you or him/herself if you leave
- Finding out your partner was violent toward previous partners
- Being manipulated by your partner to do things against your wishes
- Having your partner feel good or better when you fail

Source: Relationships Violence Awareness & Prevention, UMBC

The **sexual** impacts occur when someone forces a partner to engage in a sex act when he/she does not or cannot consent. This can be physical, as mentioned above, or nonphysical, like threatening to spread rumors if a partner refuses to have sex.

And dating violence can take place **in person or electronically**, such as repeated texting or posting

sexual pictures of a partner online.

By talking with your student about what constitutes dating violence, you can help him or her avoid becoming a perpetrator or victim – or provide a lifeline if he/she or a friend is already in a violent relationship.

Source: CDC’s Division of Violence Prevention, “Teen Dating Violence”

## New Federal Dietary Guidelines

The federal government recently released the 2015-2020 edition of the *Dietary Guidelines* for the general public to help us consume a healthy, nutritionally adequate diet.

Five overarching guidelines make up the new recommendations, including...

1. Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan.
2. Focus on variety, nutrient density, and amount.
3. Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats and reduce sodium intake.
4. Shift to healthier food and beverage choices.
5. Support healthy eating patterns for all.

To find out more about these guidelines, go to <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>.

### Consume less than...

- 10% of calories per day from added sugars
- 10% of calories per day from saturated fats
- 2,300 mg. per day of sodium

And, if alcohol is consumed by those 21 and over, consume in moderation – up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

Source: <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>



# Honoring Black History Month

February is set aside to celebrate Black History Month and your student can raise his awareness by attending campus and community events. You can also connect with your student over this important theme by...

- Sharing the quiz offered below
- Discussing Black leaders, politicians, literary figures, athletes, artists, etc. and sharing what you admire about these people and why
- Asking your student what she is learning about Black history in class or through campus programs

Here is a simple quiz to share with your student to learn more about this important population.

## Questions:

1. Why was February chosen for Black History Month?
2. In what year did Black History Month begin (after being Black History Week)?
3. Which civil rights leader became the first African-American to make a serious bid for the U.S. presidency when he ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1983?
4. Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Black Studies at Cal. State University, created \_\_\_\_\_ as a way to unite the African-American community after the Watts riots in L.A.
5. Who was known as the “Moses of her people,” helping more than 300 slaves escape via the Underground Railroad?
6. Which black track-and-field athlete won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, thus derailing Adolf Hitler’s intent to use the Olympic Games as a display of Arian supremacy?
7. Which black broadcaster and author hosts his own TV show?

## Answers:

1. Because it contained the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, two men who made a significant impact on black history
2. In 1976, the celebration was expanded to the entire month of February
3. The Rev. Jesse Jackson
4. He created the well-known holiday of Kwanzaa, which is celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, in 1966
5. Harriet Tubman
6. Jesse Owens
7. Tavis Smiley

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## Choosing a Job or Internship: Questions to Consider

When your student faces the decision about choosing a job or internship possibility for the summer, a few reflective questions can help in the process...

- What types of things might I learn here?
- Who might serve as my supervisor or a potential mentor?
- Will taking this risk serve me well in the long-run? If so, why?

- Is the experience worth:
  - The pay?
  - The need to live elsewhere?
  - Turning down something else?
- How might this experience help me figure out what I want to do career-wise?

Exploring these types of questions with your student can help him determine if a job or internship will fit in the ways he needs it to.

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## How to Start Conversations with a Counselor

Sometimes, students need to talk with an impartial party about something they’re experiencing or that is on their mind. That’s why campus counselors are available. If you’re encouraging your student to turn to these helpful professionals, remind him/her that, in these discussions, it’s important to...

- Offer the truth
- Not apologize for being there
- Not think you’re wasting anyone’s time

- Let go of thinking your problem “isn’t a big deal”
- Share your emotions and thoughts
- Answer questions to the best of your ability and comfort

Sometimes students will strike up a good rapport with a counselor right away. Other times, it’ll take awhile. Just remember that, if students don’t feel comfortable talking about concerns with one person, they can find other resources. Their comfort, safety and well-being are most important.