

February 2007

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**
- **Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school**
- **Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities**
- **Cabin fever and burnout**
- **Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near**
- **Valentine's Day depression if not dating**
- **Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety**
- **Spring break planning underway**

How healthy is your student's dating life?

Taking a Closer Look at Relationships

You may have heard your student talking about dating. Of course, parents want their child to experience happy, healthy dating experiences with others. While many relationships are positive and special, some, unfortunately, are not.

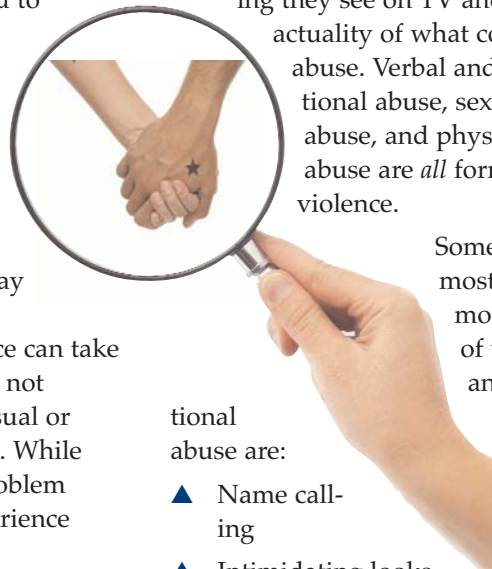
If you are concerned about the context of your student's relationships, your thoughts may be warranted. Recent statistics have shown that dating violence can take many forms, and that teens are not immune from abuse during casual or serious long-term relationships. While female teenagers report this problem more often, teen males do experience abuse in relationships as well.

Verbal and Emotional Abuse

Sometimes, in their inexperience, young daters find behaviors flattering in their partners, rather than worrying that they could be signs of potential abuse. Not allowing someone to spend time with friends, calling someone constantly to check in, and offering "advice" about hair, makeup or clothes are all behaviors that could be considered "cute," but in reality could mean much more. Verbally and emotionally abusive behaviors have become so commonplace among today's youth dating population that it is difficult to recognize when they have become problematic.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest challenges for today's youth in recogniz-

ing dating violence is the confusion between the images of severe battering they see on TV and the actuality of what constitutes abuse. Verbal and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and physical abuse are *all* forms of violence.



Some of the most common forms of verbal and emo-

tional abuse are:

- ▲ Name calling
- ▲ Intimidating looks
- ▲ Use of cell phones and pagers to maintain constant contact
- ▲ Monopolizing someone's time
- ▲ Isolation from friends, family
- ▲ Making a woman feel insecure
- ▲ Saying "I love you" too soon
- ▲ Making threats
- ▲ Manipulation
- ▲ Humiliating someone in public

Some of the most common forms of sexual abuse are:

- ▲ Unwanted touching and kissing
- ▲ Statutory rape

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“Weight”-y Concerns

Beyond the “Freshman 15”

You have probably heard the term “freshman 15” used to describe the amount of weight a first-year student typically gains while away at school. Recent research studies show, however, that first-year students are not gaining as much weight as previously thought.

The research shows that the “freshman 15” is more like 5-7 pounds, with an additional gain of 2-3 pounds during the sophomore year. While folks are happy to hear that the idea of the “freshman 15” is a myth, the trend of gradual weight gain could be even more problematic.

Two recent studies, one funded by the federal government and the other by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, measured weight gain among male and female students: the first spanned the freshman year and the second included the sophomore year. In both studies, students were weighed four times during the year—at the beginning of the school year in September, at the end of the first semester in December, after the holiday break in January and at the end of the year in May. Those who participated in the second study were also weighed at the end of their sophomore year.

The studies included more than 1250 students—382 from a private school in the Northeast and 907 from a public university in the Midwest. Results indicated that males tended to gain more weight than females, with much of that weight gained during the first semester. For those who participated in the study including the sophomore year, results indicated that

males were an average 9.5 pounds heavier and females 9.2 pounds heavier than when they started college.

Researchers continue trying to determine the reasons for this weight gain. Some possible explanations include more socializing, eating higher-fat and greater quantities of food in the cafeteria, and less physical activity.



If this trend continues, students will be at risk for developing serious health problems—no matter what the reasons are for the weight gain. You can help offset these concerns by educating your student about how to eat healthfully and take care of his/her body.

Source: ‘Freshman 15’ Really 5 or 7, but the Gains Don’t Stop on www.cnn.com, October 23, 2006.

The time for 2007-08 housing decisions is here!

“Where Should I Live Next Year?”

It’s time for students to determine their housing plans for next year. What on-campus options would they like to pursue? Is off-campus appealing? Help them work through important questions as part of this decision-making process:

- ▼ **WHO?** Who should I live with? Is it healthy for my current roommate and I to keep rooming together? Do I want to try living with a group? What if I can’t find anyone who wants to share a space with me? Will my friends and I remain friends if we live together?
- ▼ **WHERE?** If I live on campus next year, what environment would be best? Should I live in a campus apartment, a suite, a theme house or somewhere else? If I live off campus, should I live with my family? Or should I get a place with some friends? How far away from campus do I want to be? What does that mean transportation-wise? Will I still be able to be involved with activities that are important to me?
- ▼ **HOW?** How will I pay for my housing next year? Do I have enough for the deposit that’s required now? Where will I store my belongings during the summer? Do I need to find separate housing for the summer? What will I do about a meal plan? Will I need to get a job?

These questions help students look at the big picture. It’s not just about holing up with three of their best buddies in an off-campus apartment or an on-campus suite. It’s about how this decision will impact other areas of their life, from involvement to finances to wellness... and beyond.

It’s Your Student’s Responsibility

Many on-campus lotteries occur between January and March. Encourage your student to attend informational meetings and ask questions now to learn about this process. They’ll feel much more prepared if they do. It’s up to your student to follow campus housing procedures in order to secure housing for next year. If he/she doesn’t understand the process, there are people who can help such as RAs and residence hall directors. Students need to be proactive and informed in order to make the housing system work in their favor!



Celebrating Valentine's Day Creatively

Who says Valentine's Day is just for those who are dating or married?

Valentine's Day is about love! You can show your love for your student this month by...

- ❖ **Sending a gift basket** with your student's favorite treats from home.
- ❖ **Making a CD mix** with songs your student loves or songs from his/her childhood.

❖ **Calling or writing** to share some of your favorite stories from your student's childhood.

❖ **Sending a fun "romantic" movie** and some microwave popcorn, a pair of cute heart pajamas or a T-shirt, or cool room decor.

❖ **Putting together a family**



newsletter dedicated to your student—have siblings and extended family members write "articles," submit fun pictures and more!

❖ **Sending a creative e-card or monkey mail message** (visit www.careerbuilder.com/monk-e-mail for information on Monk-e-mail) or create and send a multi-media "photo story" using these directions—<http://technology.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=153185>

Taking a Closer Look at Relationships

Some of the most common forms of physical abuse are:

- ▲ Hitting, beating and pushing
- ▲ Restraining
- ▲ Roughhousing/play wrestling

What You Can Do

If you are concerned about your student, or your student expresses concern to you about a friend, trust

your instincts. You can play a pivotal role in helping your student identify the characteristics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. This is perhaps the most proactive action you can take.

Since you know your student well, you will be able to sense whether a direct or indirect approach will be best in talking about this tough topic. During your conversation, you might find the following helpful:

- ▲ Try to dialogue, rather than interrogate
- ▲ Ask open-ended questions
- ▲ Reflect back on what you think you are hearing
- ▲ Listen non-judgmentally
- ▲ Try to refrain from demonstrating negative body language
- ▲ Offer resources, on campus and beyond, that could be helpful (i.e. residence life, wellness staff, the counseling center, an advisor or coach, campus security, campus min-

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Dating Violence

Dr. Jill Murray, author of *But I Love Him*, suggests that these factors contribute to teen dating violence:

- the need for peer approval
- gender-role expectations
- lack of experience in relationships
- little contact with adult resources
- less access to societal resources like medical attention and shelters
- barriers to gaining legal assistance
- substance abuse

istry/interfaith center staff, hot-lines, etc.)

Overall, remember that if your student opens up to you about issues he/she is experiencing or witnessing among peers, it's because your opinion is trusted. If necessary, contact campus security or the dean of students to garner support. If, at any time, your student feels unsafe, he/she can *always* file a report with campus police.

Resources: *But I Love Him* by Dr. Jill Murray, HarperCollins Publishers, 2000 National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center at www.safeyouth.org

How frequently does dating violence occur?

According to the "Love Is Not Abuse" organization, this is a difficult statistic to gather. More often than not, these statistics underestimate the reality of the problem. One 2005 national survey found that...

...Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend had threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a break-up.

...13% of teenage girls who said they have been in a relationship report being physically hurt or hit.

...More than 1 in 4 teenage girls in a relationship (26%) report enduring repeated verbal abuse.

Source: www.loveisnotabuse.com/statistics_abuseandteens.htm

Attention Parents of Returning Students:

Financial Aid Facts

Here's a friendly reminder that financial aid forms need to be filed during the month of April. For specific deadlines, please check with us, as deadlines vary from institution to institution.

Here are some useful financial aid websites for you to utilize in securing a financial aid package:



- ✓ Free Application for Federal Student Aid • www.fafsa.ed.gov
- ✓ College Board: Connect to College Success • www.collegeboard.org
- ✓ The Financial Aid Information Page • www.finaid.org
- ✓ Scholarship Search • www.fastweb.com
- ✓ Internal Revenue Service (for information on tax benefits for higher education) • www.irs.ustreas.gov

"To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing."

-Elbert Hubbard

Reminding Students about Elevator Safety

Many college and university residence halls are equipped with elevators. These elevators are sometimes misused by students oblivious to the safety concerns surrounding their operation. This past October, a residence hall elevator accident at Ohio State University resulted in the death of an 18-year-old student. This tragic situation occurred when the weight capacity of the elevator was exceeded and the car began to descend unexpectedly, reported Yahoo News (Oct. 24, 2006). The student was pinned while trying to climb out and died at the scene.

This accident serves as a strong reminder about elevator safety. You can utilize the following safety rules, compiled by the University of Arkansas, in conversation with your student:

- **Don't overload an elevator. Check the elevator weight posted inside the car and step out if it's packed.**
- **Don't try to leave a moving elevator. The Ohio State student died when trying to escape.**
- **Don't try to force elevator doors open. This can cause an elevator to move.**
- **In an emergency, call for help. Use the emergency phone and then follow emergency personnel's instructions.**
- **In case of fire, do not use an elevator. It could lose power and trap you inside a burning building.**
- **Watch your step getting on and off an elevator. Make sure the car is level with the floor.**
- **Don't interfere with opening or closing doors. Let doors close.**
- **Never reach your hand out to stop a closing door. In today's day and age, we can never be too careful. If your student has concerns about a campus elevator, the resident director or public safety can help. Encourage your student to contact these staff members to report mechanical errors or misuse by fellow students during after-hour time periods.**



Source: Mike Stiles, Occupational Safety Coordinator for the University of Arkansas Office of Environmental Health and Safety, as quoted at <http://dailyheadlines.uark.edu/9627.htm>, Nov. 13, 2006