

A Guide to Your Student's Well-being and Personal Safety

2023-2024



Office of Health Promotion

SURC 256
CWU.EDU/WELLNESS

Talking to Your College Student about Substance Use

**An Information and Resource
Guide for Families and Support
Systems**

Introduction to Conversations About Substance Misuse

College provides a time for academic growth and personal exploration. In the fall of 2020, 61% of college students were attending full time - many of them living away from home for the first time. At Central Washington University, we recognize the impact that COVID-19 has had on families, school systems, and our students. We hope this guide will offer those supporting new students insight into healthy communication as their college student begins to explore a new environment.

Students often cite four main reasons why college campuses provide a rich environment for drug (and yes, alcohol is a drug) experimentation:

- ease of drug availability
- lack of parental influence
- normalization of drug use among peers
- low perceived risk of harm from drug use

Not only does substance misuse impact a student's physical health and well-being, students who misuse alcohol and other drugs are more likely to skip class, be less involved in student life, and take longer to graduate.

This guide was created to help families feel empowered to have healthy communication about substance use. At CWU, we do not want our students to feel they have to hide behaviors or choices from their families and others who care about them.



We also recognize that every family and support system looks different, and thus your communication style may be different. There may be sections of this guide that you relate to more than others. We encourage you to take what is most useful for you and your new college student.

Defining Substance Misuse

You may have heard the phrase "substance abuse" in the media or everyday conversation. At CWU, we are adopting the phrase "substance misuse", when interacting with students. Misuse is used to describe any situation in which a substance is used incorrectly, at higher dosage than recommended, or at improper times. It is important to note that a single episode of use may be labeled as "substance misuse" but not every student will misuse substances. We also recognize our students' medical diversity - substance misuse does not include prescribed substances being used as indicated by a medical provider.

Outlined below are the most commonly used substances on a college campus. It is important to note that this information is reflective of our larger national environment, not CWU specific. It is also important to note that all research was published before COVID-19, and current trends may look different. The terminology of "men" and "women" are used as a reflection of survey methodology.

Alcohol	Alcohol is considered to be the most widely used drug on college campuses. Research shows that women use alcohol more frequently than men, with 40.3% of college women reporting being drunk within the last month compared to 35.5% of college men.
Cigarettes	Around 15% of college students reported using cigarettes in the past year. Approximately 20% of college men report using cigarettes, while approximately 12% of college women used cigarettes.
Vaping	20% of college students reported vaping cannabis within the last year, with 11% reporting use within the last month. It is also recorded that 1 in 4 college students reported vaping nicotine in the past year.
Cannabis	About 25% of full time college students report using cannabis at least once per month, with 6% using daily. Monthly use is similar between males and females, but twice as many males report using daily compared to females.
Cocaine	One in 20 college students report using cocaine. It is also reported that men use more frequently than women (7.0% to 4.3% respectfully).

Amphetamines

Approximately 13% of college students use amphetamines such as Adderall and Ritalin without a prescription annually.

Hallucinogens

One in 20 college students report usage of hallucinogens, including LSD and MDMA. Rates for both were higher in college aged men than women.

Opioids

Opioid use among college students has decreased over the last five years by 50%. It is now noted that 1.4% of college students misused OxyContin, while 1.6% misused Vicodin. However, it is also noted that within the U.S., opioid overdose rates have topped 100,000 deaths annually.



Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Smoking & tobacco use. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html

Schulenberg, J. E., Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., Miech, R. A. & Patrick, M. E. (2019). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975–2018: Volume II, College students and adults ages 19–60. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

Understanding Personal Factors

Every student is unique and has a different history prior to CWU. We need to recognize our students' individual **risk** factors for substance misuse, as well as the various **protective** factors they possess.

Trauma History

First, we should understand that trauma can be one singular event (accident, illness, assault, death of a loved one, environmental catastrophe) or ongoing (COVID-19 pandemic, abuse or exposure to violence over time, changes in relationships such as divorce or incarceration). Approximately 75% of college students report experiencing trauma at least once in their lives. Unfortunately, some students may also experience trauma while attending college. Multiple studies show that trauma history or exposure can be linked to increases in substance use rates among all individuals.

Genetics

Did you know that anywhere from 40-60% of addiction is linked to genetic factors? While we should recognize that addiction and substance misuse are different, we also have a responsibility to make our students aware of their personal genetic risk before attending college.

Environmental Factors

These factors include family and community beliefs, policies and laws, and education systems. For example, students who grow up in homes where alcohol and tobacco use are prevalent are more likely to develop high-risk use for both substances. A high school student's exposure to alcohol and other drug education can also be correlated to their risk taking in college.

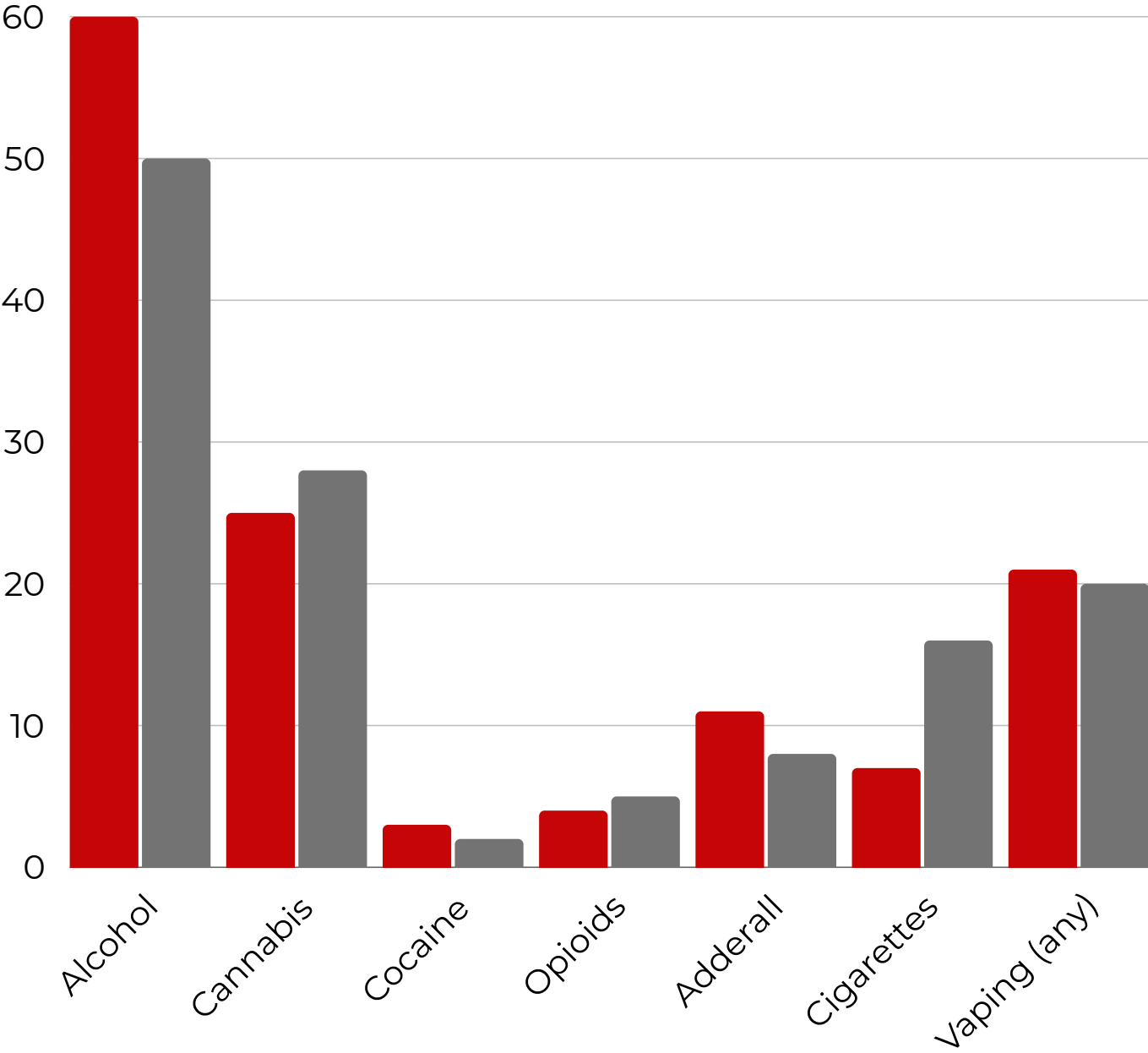
But environmental risk occurs in college too! Research shows that students living off campus report drinking at higher frequency than students who live on campus. Because students over the age of 21 are legally able to purchase alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis in the state of Washington, this availability creates an environment of greater risk for our students with these particular substances.

Availability of the Substance

How prevalent or available is this substance in our community? Is it easy or fast to use? How much does it cost to get? Is this substance normalized for college students? Do their peers use it too? Asking these questions may help you understand the risk that your student may experience.

Higher Risk Groups of Students

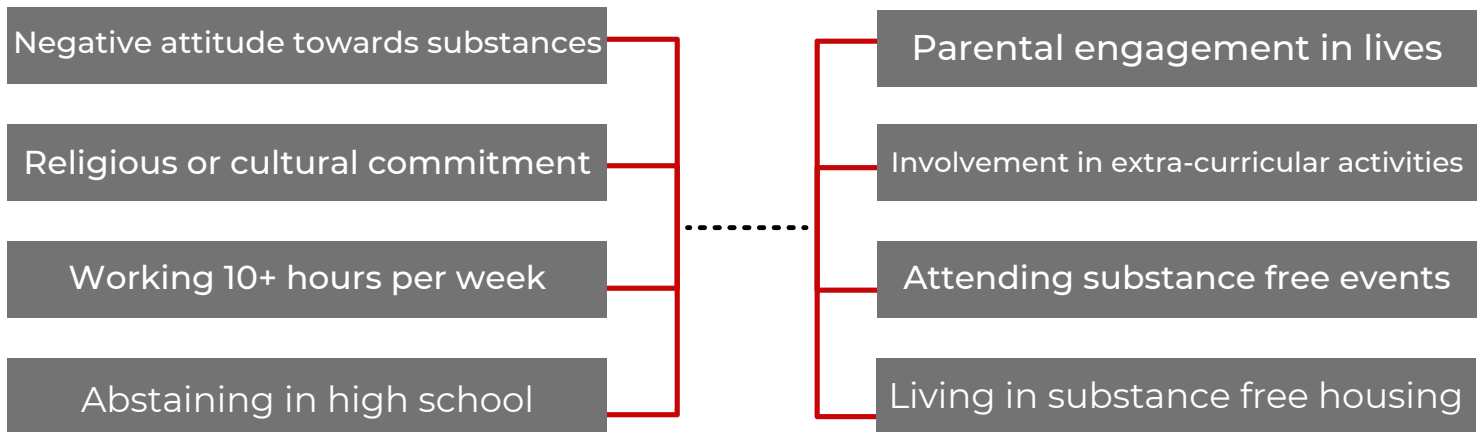
Did you realize that your student would be at higher risk for substance use just by attending college? The graph below helps us recognize which substances our students may be more likely to use due to **normalization of use**.



Source: Schulenberg, J. E., Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., Miech, R. A. & Patrick, M. E. (2019). Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2018: Volume II, College students and adults ages 19-60. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan.

Protective Factors

Central Washington University students possess a multitude of personality traits and unique skills that make them one of a kind! That's why we enjoy working with our students so much—each one has a distinctive point of view and story to tell. We value our diverse students and their diverse stories. Here are eight individual factors that decrease a student's risk of substance misuse or addiction:



Resources:

- LaBrie, J. W., Migliuri, S., Kenney, S. R., & Lac, A. (2010). Family history of alcohol abuse associated with problematic drinking among college students. *Addictive Behaviors*, 35(7), 721–725.
- Lewis, T. F., & Mobley, A. K. (2010). Substance abuse and dependency risk: The role of peer perceptions, marijuana involvement, and attitudes toward substance use among college students. *Journal of Drug Education*, 40(3), 299–314.
- Bailey, J. A., Hill, K. G., Meacham, M. C., Young, S. E., & Hawkins, J. D. (2011). Strategies for characterizing complex phenotypes and environments: General and specific family environmental predictors of young adult tobacco dependence, alcohol use disorder, and co-occurring problems. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 118(2–3), 444–451.
- DeJong, W., & Vehige, T. (2008, April). The of-campus environment: Approaches for reducing alcohol and other drug problems. *Prevention Updates*. Retrieved from <http://hecaod.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/OfCampusEnvironment.pdf>
- Cross, J. E., Zimmerman, D., & O'Grady, M. A. (2009). Residence hall room type and alcohol use among college students living on campus. *Environment and Behavior*, 41(4), 583–603.
- Huang, J. H., DeJong, W., Towvim, L. G., & Schneider, S. K. (2009). Sociodemographic and psychobehavioral characteristics of US college students who abstain from alcohol. *Journal of American College Health*, 57(4), 395–410.
- Patrick, M. E., Maggs, J. L., & Osgood, D. W. (2010). LateNight Penn State alcohol-free programming: Students drink less on days they participate. *Prevention Science*, 11(2), 155–162.
- Weitzman, E. R., Nelson, T. F., & Wechsler, H. (2003). Taking up binge drinking in college: The influences of person, social group, and environment. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 32(1), 26–35.

Building Healthy Communication

We have already discussed the difference between substance use and substance misuse. You have also begun to understand what factors may elevate your student's personal risk, as well as the unique factors that will help them thrive in the college environment. Outside of your important influence, our role is to encourage them to make empowered, value-driven decisions for their own lives. If you're worried about your student, commit to starting a conversation with them.

Before we review some communication keys, let's identify the warning signs that your student may be struggling. These warning signs may show up for a variety of reasons:

Changes in diet

Mood shifts or risk taking

Drinking or using more than usual

Not sleeping or sleeping too much

Skipping class

Social isolation or ditching friends



Some Do's and Don'ts for Communication

Listen

Give your student a chance to speak without interruptions. It can be helpful to paraphrase like "Let me see if I understand..." You are not saying that you agree or disagree, you just want to clarify.

No Distractions

Find a time when you won't be distracted by others or commitments. Choose a time when your student won't feel rushed or may not feel ready to engage.

Find Common Goals

Your student needs to be reminded that you are on their side! Work within a conversation to find a common goal for the academic year. Your student may be more likely to seek your support and encouragement if they feel you are working together.

It's not scary!

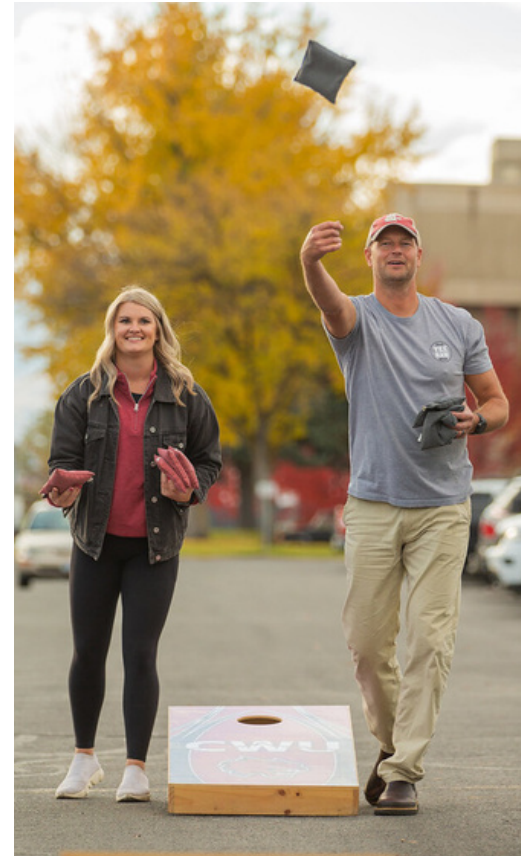
Conflict is natural, and your student may have different ideas and opinions than you- that's ok! It shouldn't be scary to ask your student what they are feeling or how they plan to handle tough situations.

Demonstrate Respect!

Use open body language, use positive language- whatever you need to convey respect! Offer your student some encouragement in the choices they have already made.

Model Honesty & Openness

"But what do I do if they ask me about my own substance use?" Tell them. Be honest, your student will know if you are lying to them. You may find it helpful to ask "Do you see any risk in this? Or is there another point of view that I didn't see?" Engage in open dialogue about choices.



You Don't Have to be an Expert

None of us are perfect. If we aren't perfect, then we can't expect our students to be either. Let's go over a few examples of content to add into your next conversation!

- Talk about some of the different risk factors that may be present. This could be a helpful time to talk about family history or family recovery journeys.
- Identify why students choose to use substances- for fun, for relaxation, socially, etc. Talk with your student about their potential motivation for use.
- Identify negative consequences that could arise from both general use and misuse.
- Identify the support systems in place to help your student if misuse should occur.
 - What are the safe ride or rideshare options? Do they require cash/ card?
 - Do you have a friend or family member you can call?
 - Does your student have access to emergency medical care, if necessary?
 - What on campus supports exist?
- Come up with ways your student can be a positive peer in their friend group.
 - Understanding "Amnesty" policy
 - Keeping an eye out for friends
 - Code word or phrase to show that it's time to leave a situation



Want to better understand your risk factors? Use the Office of Health Promotion's free e-CHECKUP TO GO tool! Follow the QR code to take a free assessment and get personalized feedback about alcohol or cannabis use.



Review of Policies & Rights

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

FERPA provides parents of children under the age of 18 the right to access educational records from any school that receives funding from the U.S. Department of Education. When a student turns 18, FERPA rights transfer to the student, meaning the student is in control of who can view their educational records.

CWU may notify parents regarding the following conduct situations:

- Documented behavior indicating a risk of harm to self or others.*
- Documented violations of the controlled substance policy.*
- Second or third violations of campus alcohol policies or state laws.*
- Parents may be notified of a first-time violation of campus alcohol policies or state laws if it involves a medical emergency, vandalism, any violence, or gross disrespect of residence hall staff or law enforcement officials.*
- Students will be required to attend an alcohol or other drug education and risk prevention class for first and possibly second-time violations. Failure to attend the class could result in required off-campus assessment. Third-time violation of policies and/or laws may result in suspension or deferred suspension if recommend by the CWU Student Conduct Hearing Officer.*

Off-campus violations of underage drinking or other infractions may be referred to the CWU Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities for sanctioning through the discretion of local court officials or law enforcement agencies.

Any questions regarding parental notification, or to seek additional information regarding a parental notification letter that you may have received, can be directed to the [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#).

CWUP- 2-40-030 Alcohol and Other Drugs

For full policy review, please visit the Policies & Procedures page on the Student Rights and Responsibilities website.

(2) Student Conduct

The university does not condone the consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors at functions sponsored by Central Washington University organizations on or off campus. Organizations and advisors are responsible for monitoring student conduct at functions sponsored by the organization.

Persons twenty-one years of age or older may possess and/or consume alcoholic beverages within the privacy of certain designated 21 or older residence hall rooms or apartments. Washington State law provides penalties for the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages by persons under twenty-one years of age and for persons who furnish alcoholic beverages to minors.

The dean of student success may place on probation any student organization or prohibit a student specific campus social function when the consumption of alcoholic beverages has become a problem or concern to the university.

Students violating any state or federal law or the alcohol and other drugs policy or procedure will result in immediate referral to the office of the dean of student success or designee for appropriate action, including disciplinary action. The Washington Administrative Code ([WAC 106-120-027: Proscribed conduct.](#)) describes behavior and sanctions a student may be subject to upon violation of any of the described conduct. Disciplinary action may range from a counseling session to expulsion, depending on the severity and number of violations. Repeated violations usually carry more significant consequences. The office of the dean of student success may include in the sanction-mandated contact with the university drug and alcohol prevention specialist and/or direct referral for assessment through a state licensed treatment agency.

CWU Good Samaritan | Amnesty

Please review [RCW 4.24.300](#) for full Washington legislation.

The welfare of our students is of the highest importance to Central Washington University. There may be times when individuals, both on and off campus, may be in critical need of assistance from medical or other professional personnel. Situations in which a student's physical and/or psychological well-being is in serious jeopardy may include, but are not limited to, incidents involving: alcohol or other drug overdose/poisoning; sexual assault; or suicide attempts. Central wants to minimize any hesitation that students or student organizations might have in obtaining help due to concern that their own behavior might be a violation of University policy.

If critical assistance is needed, students should immediately contact medical or other professional personnel. While policy violations cannot be overlooked, the University will take into consideration the positive impact of reporting an incident on the welfare of students when determining the appropriate response for policy violations. Any possible negative consequences for the reporter of the situation should be evaluated against the possible negative consequences for the student who needed intervention. At a minimum, Central hopes that a student or student organization would make an anonymous report that would put the student in need in touch with professional assistance immediately.

CWU Residence Hall Policies and Expectations

The use of drugs, including alcohol, can have a negative effect on your student life and academic success. At Central Washington University, we are committed to providing an atmosphere of creative learning and healthful living for students and have put into effect policies that do not allow the illegal use of alcohol and other drugs, on or off campus.

You may review the full Residence Hall Reference Guide [here](#).

Talking to Your College Student About Healthy Relationships & Consent

**An Information and Resource
Guide for Families and Support
Systems**

Introduction

College is an exciting environment full of new experiences and new relationships. These experiences will significantly shape the lives of students during these early years of becoming adults. Away from the familiarity of home and family, we strive to create a safe and supportive environment for students as they forge ahead on these new paths. We also know that parents and caregivers continue to hold an invaluable role in helping your students navigate life at college. As you prepare your student for college life, it's important to have conversations with them about healthy relationships and consent.

CWU Statistics

These statistics are meant to help you gain a clearer picture of the experiences that some students have while they are in college.



According to CWU's 2020 Campus Climate Survey, 6% of students reported experiencing at least one incident of sexual misconduct (sexual assault or sexual harassment) since the beginning of the school year.

According to CWU's 2018 American College Health Association National College Health Assessment, within the last 12 months:

- 11.7% of CWU students had experienced an emotionally abusive intimate relationship
- 1.5% of CWU students had experienced a physically abusive intimate relationship
- 2.2% of CWU students had experienced a sexually abusive intimate relationship

These statistics can be difficult to read. The good news is that we have resources here on campus to support students who have experienced interpersonal violence. You can also help your student learn how to navigate their relationships in healthy ways and contribute to a respectful campus culture.

Defining Healthy Relationships and Consent

New relationships are essential to the college experience, and students will find many opportunities for making friends and dating. As they prepare to enter this new social world, now is a good time to talk with your student about how to develop healthy relationships with their peers.

Five Keys to a Healthy Relationship

The five keys to a healthy relationship are Respect, Learn, Empower, Consent, and Communicate. Helping your student understand how to cultivate these in all of their relationships will give them the tools they need to create a positive campus culture.

Respect	Promote and model healthy attitudes and relationships; treat others the way you want to be treated.
Learn	Access credible information and resources to promote your overall health; when you have a question, seek answers from a credible source.
Empower	Everyone has the right to set limits, feel safe, and get support; you deserve to be respected and listened to.
Consent	Seek mutual agreement without fear or pressure; ask for consent and check in to make sure consent is clear.
Communicate	Express yourself to partners, peers, and family; you can talk openly and honestly with people you trust. If you notice something is wrong, you can speak up.



What is Consent?

Consent is an essential element for healthy relationships. Consent is important in many aspects of our daily lives, not just in sexual situations. It is a vital part of clear and honest communication.

Understanding consent helps students understand their own boundaries and communicate those boundaries clearly with others, as well as respecting others' boundaries. When talking with your student about consent, use these points to define what consent is and isn't:

- Consent is:
 - Clear, unambiguous words or actions
 - Knowing and voluntary
 - Given by all individuals involved
 - Getting permission for every physical or sexual act, every time
 - Able to be withdrawn at any time
- Consent is not:
 - Silence or lack of resistance
 - Going on a date, eating a meal, going to someone's room, or the clothes you're wearing
 - A previous or current sexual or romantic relationship
 - Forced, coerced, or received through intimidation
 - Taking advantage of incapacitation

More information can be found in [CWU's Sexual Misconduct Policies and Procedures](#).



Starting the Conversation

"How do I start conversations about healthy relationships and consent with my student?" Most of the communication tips offered earlier apply to talking about healthy relationships. You may have had these conversations before, or this may be the first time. Either way, it's normal to feel apprehensive! Here are some tips to get started.

Setting the Scene

- Find a time when there are minimal distractions, including other people or time commitments. Choose a time when your student isn't feeling rushed and is more open to engaging.
- Bring up these topics organically; if you're feeling nervous or awkward, it's okay to acknowledge that with your student.

Using Media as a Starting Point

- Discuss media you're consuming with your student
 - "Do you notice the way [insert behavior]? What do you think about that?"
 - "Yikes- isn't it weird how [insert character] is pursuing [insert other character] like that? They clearly don't want that. Why do you think things like that are seen as romantic?"
 - "Oh wow, [insert person] came out with their experience about sexual assault. That's so powerful they're sharing their story."

Relationships Matter

- Discuss the student's current friendships and relationships
 - "How are things going with your friends?"
 - "What are your expectations for this date?"
 - "It seems like you haven't talked with [insert person] in a while- how is everything going with them?"



Building Healthy Communication

The cornerstone of healthy relationships is healthy communication. You can practice building healthy communication with your student using these tools.

Values Clarification

Beyond their academic major or career goals, what kind of person does your student want to be? Defining values can be key in resolving conflict and building self-efficacy. You can use a worksheet like [this one](#) to help them clarify their values!

Defining the Relationship

Help your student ask these questions of themselves when entering a new relationship:

- What do you want out of the relationship?
- Someone to study with?
- Someone to play video games with?
- Someone to travel with?
- Someone to be emotionally intimate with?
- Someone to be sexually active with?



Responsibility

We all hurt the people we care about, often unintentionally.

How does your student currently take responsibility for their actions? How do they define accountability? Help them think through how they might make amends if they hurt someone.

Relationship Conflict

Talk with your student about a plan for managing conflict in all relationships- especially with roommates. Living with a new person in a small space is difficult! You can empower your student before move-in to advocate for themselves in difficult situations. You can also help them practice engaging in healthy, goal-oriented conflict communication. For more helpful tips about conflict communication, [visit this website](#).

Boundaries

Setting boundaries is a big step in any relationship. Holding conversations ahead of time can help your student define and clarify their emotional and physical boundaries. Help them practice articulating boundaries:

- "I'm not comfortable having overnight guests on weekdays."
- "I'm not comfortable with you drinking in the room."
- "I don't like it when you talk to me like that."

It's also important to acknowledge what **is** okay! Practice saying things like:

- "I'm comfortable with having overnight guests on the weekends."
- "You can drink when I'm not in the room."

Consent

Consent doesn't just refer to sexual situations. Consent can be used in lots of everyday interactions! Help your student practice asking for consent in scenarios like these:

- "Do you have time to help me with this assignment?"
- "Is it okay if I turn our room light on?"
- "My friend wants to come over on Saturday. Would that be alright with you?"
- "I appreciate when you ask me how my day is going."



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I'm not comfortable having these conversations with my student?

Send your student to the Wellness Center! We are happy to have conversations with your student to help set them up for success! You may also consider sharing online or printed materials for the student to review on their own and then initiate a discussion based on the content.

Q: I don't need to have this conversation- my student is a good kid.

That's great! In that case, this is a perfect opportunity to talk to your student about being a role model and active bystander for their peers. Peers who model pro-social behavior have a strong impact on the people around them. When students exhibit healthy behaviors (like setting boundaries, asking for consent, and intervening in problematic situations), their peers are more likely to exhibit those same behaviors. Have a conversation with them about how powerful it is to have that skillset already, and how important it is to model that for the people around them – especially as they enter new social environments when they get to campus.

Q: My student is at a different maturity level, and I'm not sure if they're ready for these conversations. How do I still have these conversations with them?

There are some great resources out there for talking to children and young adults about healthy relationships and consent. [Loveisrespect](#) is a resource that helps teach teenagers and young adults about healthy relationships. [The Australian Parenting Website](#) has information about talking to people of all ages about consent.

Q: What kind of education does CWU provide about these topics?

Here at CWU, we strive to cultivate a culture of healthy relationships, consent, and respect. We provide education about these topics through a number of venues, including:

- Week of Welcome
- Partnerships with Athletics, ROTC, Office of International Studies, Cat Camp, AUAP, and multiple academic programs
- Annual programs and events

Q: Does CWU offer self-defense classes?

Yes! Students can take PEF 132: Women's Self-Defense (a 1-credit course) in the fall.

Q: What do I do if a student shares that they have been sexually assaulted?

This can be incredibly difficult for a caregiver or support person to hear. No one wants this to happen to anyone they know. The good news is that you can be a supportive person for them during this difficult time. Here are some ways that you can help:

- Reassure them that it wasn't their fault and that you believe them.
- Ask them if they feel safe.
- If they are in immediate danger, help them call 911.
- If they aren't in immediate danger, but don't feel safe, Aspen (the victim advocacy agency in Ellensburg) is available 24/7 at 509-925-9384.
- Let them choose what to do. Offer them options (get a Sexual Assault Nurse Examination, make a police report), but don't tell them what to do. Give them power and control by empowering them to decide what to do next.
- Let them know you're there to support them.
- Connect them to campus resources including:
 - P.A.T.H. Confidential Advocacy
 - Student Counseling Services
 - WildcatCare 365 (free virtual counseling, health, and wellness services for students)

Q: My student has already experienced assault or abuse. How can I continue to support them when they move to campus?

It can be scary to send your student to a new place where you can't be there with them.

Here are some ways you can help set them up for success:

- Make a plan with them before they get here
- Help them make an appointment with a confidential P.A.T.H. Advocate to get connected with campus and community resources
- Help them make an appointment with CWU Disability Services to discuss accommodations

Review of Policies & Rights

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

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Any questions regarding parental notification, or to seek additional information regarding a parental notification letter that you may have received, can be directed to the [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#).

Sexual Misconduct Process

When the CWU Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC) receives a report of Sexual Misconduct, the Title IX coordinator reviews the report and contacts the Reporting Party/Complainant to explain resolution options as well as offer supportive measures.

For full policy review, please visit the Policies & Process page [here](#).

Talking to Your College Student About Mental Health

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Central Washington University is an EEO/AA/Title IX Institution. Central Washington University's policies and practices affirm and actively promote the rights of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, age, marital status, disability, or status as a protected veteran is prohibited. The university provides an internal procedure for reporting discrimination and affords protection against retaliation for participating in the complaint process. Central Washington University complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and executive orders including when soliciting bids and in the fulfillment of all contracts with governmental agencies. Direct related inquiries to Equal Opportunity, Mitchell Hall First Floor, Ellensburg, WA 98926-7425; Telephone 509-963-2206; or email oeo@cwu.edu. Persons of disability may request this material in alternative format or make arrangements for reasonable accommodations by calling the Office of Health Promotion at (509) 963-3213 or email at wellness@cwu.edu.

Introduction to Conversations About Mental Health

College is seen as a time to make new friends, try new experiences, and as a stepping stone to the future. At Central, we care about more than just academics - we care about each student as an individual, unique in their identity. Being away from family and friends and thrust into a new world on your own can cause some students to develop or worsen existing mental illnesses. It can be scary to talk about mental health with your student, but as they prepare for college life, it's important to have conversations about mental health and how to watch out for their mental well-being.

Many college students often think they are alone in their troubles, or that no one else has ever felt that way. National statistics tell us otherwise:



- 1 in 3 college students experience anxiety and/ or depression
- 67% of young adults with anxiety/ depression don't seek treatment
- Suicide is the #2 leading cause of death in young adults

Mental health issues can impact your students college experience, and may affect academics, student life, athletics, friends, connection to family, and increase risk to interpersonal harm or substance use.

This guide was created to help families feel empowered in healthy communication about mental health. At CWU, we do not want our students to feel alone, hopeless, or that they have no where to turn to.

We also recognize that every family and support system looks different, and thus your communication style may be different. There may be sections of this guide that you relate to more than others.

Defining Mental Health

Mental health looks at one's emotional and psychological well-being and the current state of it. In our culture, "mental illness" still holds stigma, describing someone as broken or unproductive. However, many people you walk past on the street, and even on campus, live with a mental illness. Mental illness can affect a person's ability to function over a long period of time. Two of the most common mental illnesses in young adults is depression and anxiety.

Mental health is affected by 9 different dimensions, and lacking in some areas can negatively affect your overall mental health. These dimensions are: emotional, social, spiritual, financial, occupational, environmental, physical, intellectual, and cultural.

The following have been identified as the most common mental health issues on college campuses. It is important to note that this information is reflective of our larger national environment, not CWU specific.

Depression	Depression is quickly becoming one of the most prevalent mental illnesses on college campuses. In 2022, 44% of college students nationwide had depression, with women, students of color, low-income, and LGBTQIA+ students being higher risk.
Generalized Anxiety	37% of college students live with anxiety, which affects everyday life. Those with anxiety may be more likely to turn to substance use to cope.
Disordered Eating	Disordered eating describes abnormal eating behaviors that do not warrant a diagnosis. This can be a result from homesickness, athletics, social media, or social stress. 14% of college students experience Disordered Eating.
Home sickness	The move away from home is difficult for students, one study found that 94% of students experience homesickness in the first 10 weeks. This manifests in sleeping problems, difficulty concentrating, and withdrawal from social situations.
Seasonal Affective Disorder	SAD is often associated with winter, and it's a time when your student might exhibit depressive symptoms. This looks like increase irritability, lowered mood, change in school performance. At least 13% students experience SAD.

Understanding Personal Factors

One of the best things about college is that each student has their own history prior to coming on campus. This means that we need to recognize that mental health looks different for everyone, as well as the various **protective** factors they possess.

Relationships

All of us have characteristics that can make us vulnerable or resilient to mental health distress/mental illness. We all have relationships with friends, family, community, and society, and these characteristics exist in each different area. In personal relationships, parental involvement can be seen as a protective factor. In campus community, this protective factor might look like club and class involvement. In society, or campus policy, these protective factors can look like campus counseling and help on or off campus.

Supportive relationships with family, friends, and community are one of the strongest protective factors to your student. Moving to a new place often means starting over with friends and groups, however its important that your student feels they belong on campus to protect against negative mental health.

Physical

As important as mental health is, its also important to care for the body. Caring for the physical health and help promote positive mental health. This protective factor relies on the student to exercise, have a balanced diet, and getting adequate sleep.

Healthy Coping Mechanisms

Healthy coping mechanisms, or self-care, are important to build and develop before and during a students first year on campus. This can look many different ways such as reading, art, socializing, watching your favorite movie, mindfulness, or even taking a drive. These look different for each student, and is important to rely on as a break from overwhelming situations.

Campus Support

At CWU, we take students mental health seriously. We recognize that for them to be successful in their studies, they need to be successful in their personal life. We have many resources for your student, including Student Counseling Services, Student Health Services, TimelyCares, over 150 student clubs, Disability Services and more.

Building Healthy Communication

To start the conversation about mental health, it's important to first know what to look out for. This page will go over warning signs for suicide, depression and anxiety. It can be a hard subject to think about, but a protective factor is knowing the signs and how to help.

ALGEE

An important and easy tool you can do to memorize how to help is remembering ALGEE. ALGEE is a suicide prevention tool meant to walk you through your conversation with your student.

Assess for risk of suicide or harm. Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide will not make them more suicidal. **This is a myth**, and it may open up the conversation instead.

Listen non-judgementally. This can be difficult, but try to be accepting, genuine, empathetic, and keep an open body language and blame-free communication.

Give reassurance and information. Let your student know that you don't think they are lazy, faking it or weak. Give them hope for recovery, and provide practical help and information about resources.

Encourage appropriate professional help. Discuss options with your student about professional help, on or off campus. If your student doesn't want help, they can always start later.

Encourage self-help and other support strategies. Identify friends or support groups that can help your student, and be gentle when suggesting self-help, such as exercise, relaxation training, or faith.

This can be a scary situation, but CWU is here to support your student during their whole journey, and to give them the correct tools and resources for their success.



You Don't Have to be an Expert

Identifying possible mental health issues is challenging, and varies from person to person. It's important to have these conversations before your student starts showing signs, not afterwards. Conversations around healthy coping mechanisms can start early in building resilience for later on in life. It can be hard to see how these conversations can naturally arise, but notice media and news around you and have that serve as the beginning of your conversation.

Modeling Positive Health

Students often learn their skills from their caregivers. Conversations around mental health and authenticity in relationships can start when you are open and honest about your own mental health. Modeling positive mental health can look like prioritizing self-care and talking about your mental health.

Breaking the Stigma

Mental illness has a negative connotation in our society. People with mental illness can be seen as broken, weak, lazy, or attention seekers. We internalize these thoughts, and in return we bottle up our feelings. Helping your student grow in their emotional maturity can start with a household that talks openly about their mental health, prioritizes own and others self-care, and promoting professional help when needed.



Warning Signs for Suicide, Depression, and Anxiety

These signs alone might be common in college students, but people experiencing suicide ideation, depression or anxiety typically show 2 or more of these signs for at least 2 weeks and affect every day life and the relationships around them.

Depression

- Loss of enjoyment in activities/hobbies
- Lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Changes in diet
- Withdrawing from friends, family or society
- Acting recklessly

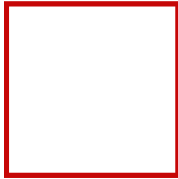
Anxiety

- Unnecessary or excessive fear and worry
- Mind racing or going blank
- Increased substance use
- Restlessness or feeling "on edge"
- Hyperventilation
- Muscle aches or pains, inability to relax
- Chest pain, pounding heart

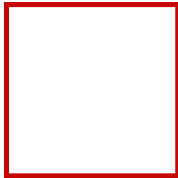
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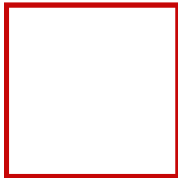
Read the Office of Health Promotion's Resource Guide about Substance Use, Healthy Relationships, and Mental Health



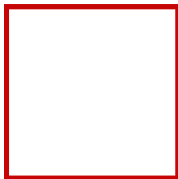
Download the TimelyCare app for free, on demand counseling and medical appointments



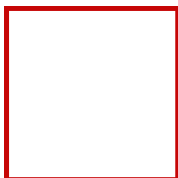
Download the Rave Guardian app for up-to-date information from Campus Police and Safety



Review the Campus Recovery and PATH webpages and follow the Office of Health Promotion on social media!



Encourage your student to reach out to their roommate(s) to introduce themselves



Get HYPE about coming to CWU!

CWU Campus Resources

Office of Health Promotion

SURC 256
(509) 963- 3213
Wellness@cwu.edu

Counseling Services

Black Hall 225
(509) 963-1391

Student Health Services

400 E. University Way
Corner of 11th and Poplar
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7585
(509) 963-1881

Disability Services

Hogue Hall 126
(509) 963-2214
DS@cwu.edu

Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities

Bouillon Hall 205
(509) 963-1817
Student.Conduct@cwu.edu

Wildcat Food Pantry

Brooks Library 153B
(509) 963-1856
wildcatpantry@cwu.edu

Office of Case Management

Bouillon Hall 203
(509) 963-1515
deanstudentsuccess@cwu.edu

Financial Aid

Bouillon Hall 106
(509) 963-1611
FinancialAid@cwu.edu

Transfer Center

Bouillon Hall 210
(509) 963-1390
transfer@cwu.edu

Housing & Residence Life

Button Hall
(509) 963-1831
Housing@cwu.edu

TimelyCare

- 24/7/365 care provided to CWU students free of charge
- Counseling, medical appointments, psychiatry, and mental health resources
- Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to download!
- Use CWU student login info to register



Kittitas County & Local Resources

Aspen

- Victim advocacy services for those impacted by interpersonal violence
- 24/7 Help Line: (509) 925-9384
- 220 W. 4th Ave, Ellensburg, WA 98926

Merit Resource Services

- Substance use assessments and, Intensive Outpatient services, and Outpatient services
- Phone: (509) 925-9821
- 200 E 3rd Avenue, Ellensburg, WA 98926

Comprehensive Healthcare

- Counseling services
- Phone: (509) 925-7507
- 707 N. Pearl St, Suites E & K, Ellensburg, WA 98926

Kittitas Valley Healthcare

- Hospital and emergency room services
- SANE trained professionals
- Phone: (509) 962-9841
- 603 S Chestnut St, Ellensburg, WA 98926

