

Parent & Family Pulse Poll – March 2015 – Difficult Conversations

Results (69 responses)

My student is a:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
High school student	13.0%	9
Freshman	36.2%	25
Sophomore	21.7%	15
Junior	21.7%	15
Senior	7.2%	5
Grad student	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		69

Which of the following topics do you find the most challenging to discuss with your student?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Alcohol and substance use	5.8%	4
Healthy romantic relationships	26.1%	18
Finances	13.0%	9
Academic progress	18.8%	13
Safety on or off campus	8.7%	6
Anxiety and/or depression	13.0%	9
Career options	10.1%	7
General health and wellness	4.3%	3
Other (please specify)		9
<i>answered question</i>		69

Finances

If you haven't talked with your student about finances, it is never too late. Work on a budget with your student—discuss who is paying for what (tuition, room/board, books, groceries, money for socializing, etc.). If your student is moving out of the residence halls at the end of the semester, this is a good time to revisit finances. Red to Black is a peer-to-peer financial counseling service that is FREE to Texas Tech students. They can help your student with budgeting, learning about credit, and much more. Visit them at <http://ttu.org/sync.com/org/redtoblack/> for more information.

Anxiety and/or Depression

Don't be afraid to talk to your student—you may be in the best position to help! Encourage your student to visit the Student Counseling Center on campus. Here is a helpful video that shows the services the Counseling Center offers and how your student can make an appointment (they also have walk-in hours from 12:30pm to 3:30pm M-F): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKJ0wT6cMB8>.

Survey respondents found "healthy romantic relationships" (26%) to be the most difficult conversation to have with their students, followed by academic progress (19%). Finances and anxiety and/or depression tied for third at 13%.

Healthy Romantic Relationships:

Some tips for building healthy relationships to share with your student (from the Texas Tech Student Counseling Center):

- Be yourself
 - Don't try to relate to others by acting like you think they would want/expect you to. Being real from the start gives each person a chance to see if they can be comfortable with each other's beliefs, interests, looks, and lifestyle.
- Communicate better
 - Use "I" statements when talking to others about your thoughts or feelings.
 - Self-disclose at a slow, but steady rate.
 - Ask for what you need/want.
 - Check out your assumptions. You are no mind reader either. Misunderstandings can arise from acting on what you guess your friend/partner wants.
 - Give both of you permission to peacefully refuse each other's requests at times
- Reciprocate
 - Give equal importance to the feelings, interests, and needs of each person in the relationship. Develop the skill of both giving and receiving emotional support.

It's okay if your student is not involved in a relationship, and he or she may need to hear that from you. Many students feel pressured to be in relationships because they think that is what is expected. Visit the Student Counseling Center website at www.scc.ttu.edu for more information.

Academic Progress

Talking with your student about academic progress can be tricky. Establish an agreement early on with your student about sharing/discussing grades at the end of each semester. At the end of the semester, spend some time with your student and discuss how he or she is doing. Just asking "how are your grades?" will probably just get a "fine" out of your student. Try not to have a judgmental tone when discussing grades—use grades as a way to discuss progress, and how your student can improve if needed. Some more tips about discussing grades with your student from College Parents of America: <http://www.collegeparents.org/members/resources/articles/talking-your-college-student-about-grades>