



Staying Safe at College

Talking Points on Sexual Assault

No matter your gender or sexual orientation, no one goes to college expecting to experience sexual assault or be accused of inappropriate behavior. A little pre-planning, and open discussions with friends and potential partners will help ensure you have fun and keep everyone safe while avoiding unintended consequences.

The first and most important step is mutual respect. Respecting yourself, your friends and your potential partners. You can do this by being **READY, SAFE and ACT.**

**For the purposes of this information, alcohol is a stand in for any substance that may alter good judgment.*

Before you go out for the evening, set your expectations (R-E-A-D-Y):

Route: Where are you going? How far from home are you willing to go? Is there anywhere you don't want to go?

Exit strategy: What is your exit plan? What time do you want to get back home?

Alcohol*: How much do you plan to drink?... set a limit. Getting drunk should not be a primary goal.

Do you have your stuff?: Make sure that you have your ID, Phone, Money and Keys (and condoms) attached to your body, so that you do not lose them along the way.

Your friends: Who will be your buddies? Have you talked about what you expect their role to be and what they expect your role to be? Discuss how you intend to check in with each other and how often.

When you are out with your friends (S-A-F-E):

Surroundings: Be aware of your surroundings, including who is there, where the exits are and where your friends are.

Alcohol: Monitor how much you have had to eat and drink (including water). Make sure you are hydrated and have something in your stomach.

Friends: Understand that while your friends are responsible for helping to make sure you get home safely, you are also responsible for their safety as well. Respect and value your friendships enough not to leave anyone alone.

Exits: There is no shame in going home early (or alone!) when you are ready to go. Just let your friends know when you leave and when you arrive home safely.

When you meet someone you are attracted to (A-C-T):

Assess your safety: Decide in advance what your intentions are. Do you want to just flirt? Do you want to do more than talk? Make the decision early on, and make sure to tell your buddy what your goal is.

Communicate/Consent: Talk first! Who is this person? Hit up your friends and check in about any change of plans. Make sure your intentions are clear and find out what their intentions are.

Think about consequences: Know yourself: Step back and think about what you are really comfortable with. If you are alone with the other person, do not just "wing it" and see what happens. The chance for an unexpected outcome is too high. If the action starts to move farther or faster than you intend, don't wait.

Clearly say "No," leave or call your buddy. If the other person says no at any point, doesn't seem into it, or appears intoxicated, stop immediately and check in.

A few words on consent:

Everyone's tolerance is different, so for some people, even one drink can impair their judgment. Check in that you and your partner are feeling sober enough to give appropriate consent. Practice checking for consent in ways that feel authentic for you. For example: "Are you good?" "Do you want to...?" Make sure the answers are verbal and the intention is clear. Most college policies emphasize verbal responses over action for consent to be established. Always ask for verbal consent before having intercourse.

Partners can become more attractive when you add alcohol or drugs. Make sure you don't hook up with someone when you are under the influence that you wouldn't want to be with in the morning. Also, do not have sex with someone who is too drunk or stoned to give consent, and understand that drunken consent is very different from sober and thoughtful consent. Unless you know exactly how much the other person has had to drink, waiting for another time to hook up is the wisest move.

Emotional and physical violence are very different from love and sex, and should not be confused. Stay away from anyone who tries to coerce you into a relationship or sexual act by using guilt or force. If you are in a situation where someone is putting pressure on you, make sure you say NO loudly and clearly and act quickly to get away. This is not shameful, and you may need to tell a police, teacher or college dean to make sure that this behavior is not repeated toward you or anyone else. On the flip side, do not approach anyone who does not actively consent to your advances.

Social Media Tips:

Do not erase texts or social media exchanges. If you are accused of anything, or if someone has acted inappropriately, these electronic trails can provide important evidence. Similarly, don't post anything on social media when you have been drinking that you wouldn't broadcast when sober. Even if it can be "erased," there is always a social media trail, and it can be used against you.