

This guide will help parents and caregivers learn about Beverly Hills High School in order to help their child thrive and enjoy their educational experience. This guide will provide useful tools to help you better understand adolescents so that you can help your teens to be happy, healthy, safe and to reach their goals. Being tuned in to what it's like to be an adolescent and understanding their high school world can help parents stay connected and have more influence on the decisions teenagers make.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BECOMING A NORMAN..... 2
 THE TRANSITION INTO BEVERLY.....2
 NORMANAID SERVICES FOR NEW STUDENTS.....2
 FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY2

NORMAN NATION 3
 BE BHHS’ S BIGGEST FAN3
 WORK WITH OUR SCHOOL TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS.....3
 BE A PART OF THE NORMAN TEAM.....3

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL NORMAN 4
 TIPS FROM BHHS TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND STUDENTS4
 WHAT IF MY TEEN IS NOT SHOWING SIGNS OF SUCCEEDING.....5
 COMMON PROBLEMS THAT INTERFERE WITH STUDENT SUCCESS.....5
 DISCOURAGED STUDENTS AND POOR PERFORMANCE.....5
 HELP YOUR TEENS IMPROVE THEIR GRADES5

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEEN..... 6
 A LOOK AT A TYPICAL NORMAN.....6
 THE TEENAGE BRAIN.....7

SELF-ESTEEM..... 8
 DEFINING SELF-ESTEEM8
 SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM..... 8
 HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR TEEN’S SELF- ESTEEM.....9

SAFELY NAVIGATING THE BEVERLY SCENE 10
 SOCIAL GATHERINGS10
 SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS REGARDING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.....11
 COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT SEX12
 PARENTS GUIDE TO HELPING THEIR TEEN DEAL WITH LGBT ISSUES13
 INTERNET DRAMA14
 BULLYING15

RECOGNIZING RISKY TEEN BEHAVIORS..... 17
 DEPRESSION18
 ALCOHOL AND DRUGS20
 SELF-INJURY21
 SUICIDE23

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEEN..... 25
 HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEEN.....25
 SOMEONE YOUR TEENS CAN TALK TO.....27

BHHS RESOURCES.....28

BECOMING A NORMAN

THE TRANSITION INTO BEVERLY

Beginning the journey into Beverly Hills High School can be both exciting and anxiety-producing. Students may worry about classes, grades, friends and peer-pressure. Read the Norman Guide with your teen to become familiar with the school's policies, classes, programs, and activities. We encourage parents to become knowledgeable about the high school in order to better answer questions, offer guidance, and calm your teen's fears.

Become Familiar with BHHS

- BHHS website at <http://bhhs.bhusd.org>
-Visit Counselors' Corner
- Read Norman Guide
- Read BHHS & PTSA Bulletins
- Join PTSA
- Attend school events
- Visit NormanAid Center
- Visit Career Center
- Communicate with teachers & counselors

Opportunities for New Students

- Peer Counseling Pizza Party
- Extra Curricular activities
- NormanAid Student Support Center (room 288)
 - Counseling intervention
 - Peer Counseling
 - Maple Counseling
 - Lunch Socials

NORMANAID CENTER –SUPPORT FOR NEW STUDENTS

Encourage your teen to visit our student support center. The NormanAid Center offers many services that benefit all students, and our students transiting into BHHS have found the programs to be extremely valuable. Our Intervention Counselor, Maple Counselors, and Peer Counselors can counsel new students, give them tools and resources to help them thrive at BHHS, calm any of their fears, and answer any of their questions or concerns. In addition, our Peer Counselors give campus tours and host a pizza party in August to welcome our new-to-district students.

FOSTER CONFIDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Take a step back so your teen can be independent and responsible

Students are expected to be more independent and more responsible than they were in middle school. Teens are learning to take care of themselves as they enter adulthood. High school is a perfect opportunity for teens to practice advocating for themselves. We urge students to take the initiative to meet with their teachers and counselors on their own and to advocate for themselves as often as possible. We encourage parents to gently step back and allow their adolescents to step forward. This independence will build confidence in your teen and will prepare him/her for college. Although your role as a parent will likely change, it is important that you continue to be involved in your teen's life throughout high school to ensure that he/she is making good choices and decisions.

NORMAN NATION

BE BHHS’S BIGGEST FAN!

It is crucial that parents collaborate with school personnel. Do not talk poorly of administrators, counselors, teachers or other staff members in front of your teen. Your attitude can either reinforce or negate school values. We all need be on the same team; our number one goal is helping your child be the BEST that he or she can be. We are very fortunate to have an incredible staff who are available to support your teen academically, personally, and socially. Parents MUST support our school and staff in order for teens to trust and respect school personnel.

“Children’s attitudes about education and school are, to a great extent, determined by what their parents say and do.” (O’Brian, 2010)

WORK WITH BHHS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS

Beverly students need to adapt to different expectations, communication, and teaching styles. We want our students to be resilient and learn how to succeed in all classes even when struggling with subject matter or teaching style. If your child complains about a class or staff member, stay objective and try not to use blame or put-downs. Before forming an opinion, communicate with the staff member. Be open and listen; share any concerns, suggestions, or feedback with your child.

“Parents and teachers need to remember that they can best help a student succeed when they work together as a team.” (O’Brian, 2010)

BE A PART OF THE NORMAN TEAM

1. Insist that your child respect BHHS staff members.
2. Make sure your teen is in school, on time, everyday.
3. Encourage your teen to apply him/herself and do his/her best.
4. Talk about the importance of getting a good education.
5. Respect rules and ensure that your teen follows them.
6. Attend school functions.
7. Check current grades and communicate regularly with teachers.

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL NORMAN

Beverly Hills High School team members want all students to succeed. Parents play an essential role in fostering and supporting a child's academic success. Below are tips from our teachers, counselors and students on how to help your teens succeed at Beverly Hills High School.

TIPS FROM BHHS TEACHERS

- “Visit SnapGrades and/or ask your teen for the current grade in the class and for current assignments before asking the teacher, as most students know how they are doing.”
- “Stress the importance of students taking responsibility.”
- “Stress importance of academics and proper classroom behavior.”
- “Watch for warning signs, e.g., “I don't have any homework.”
- “Use email to keep in touch with teachers. Don't wait for major problems to develop before making contact.”
- “Watch for our progress reports every five weeks and pay special attention to the teacher comments on them.”
- “Get students reading now as much as possible. Make a special date to go to the bookstore or the library. Have a summer reading expectation in the home.”
- “Attendance matters! Both tardies and absences affect the student's performance and the class environment.”

TIPS FROM BHHS COUNSELORS

- “Have students complete a certain amount of studying each day, even after the day's homework is finished.”
- “Encourage students to meet personally with teachers often to communicate about their struggles or questions.”
- “Make sure all technology is turned off and put away during daily study time.”
- “Refer your teen to the NormanAid Center if you feel he/she is experiencing personal challenges that may impact him/her in the classroom.”
- “Recognize your teen's effort and acknowledge each academic success.”
- “Attend BHHS parent programs, parent workshops, and parent nights.”

TIPS FROM BHHS STUDENTS

- “Stay connected with your kids.”
- “Help your kids understand that it's important to do well for the sake of doing well.”
- “Make sure your kids are dressed appropriately.”
- “Love your kids for everything they are and everything they're not.”
- “Allow your teen to have a balanced school and social life.”
- “Talk about the difference between learning and getting the grade.”
- “Talk with your teen about drugs, alcohol and sex.”
- “Ask your kids what they learned that day.”
- “Familiarize yourself with the staff.”
- “Let your kids know you're always there and don't be judgmental of what they tell you.”

WHAT IF MY TEEN IS NOT SHOWING SIGNS OF SUCCEEDING?

“Please recognize that Beverly Hills High School standards are much higher than they were when you were in high school.” BHHS Student

COMMON PROBLEMS THAT INTERFERE WITH STUDENT SUCCESS

- Poor attendance or tardiness
- Classroom behavior problems, such as: talking in class, not participating
- Poor study habits
- Weak organizational skills
- Overriding teacher recommendations, resulting in improper class placement

Discouraged students and poor performance

“I would be more motivated to succeed in school if you didn’t call me “lazy” but tried to help me figure out why I am not doing well.” BHHS Student

Parents frequently assume that school problems are caused by lack of effort, and that making teens study more will improve their performance. There is often much more to it. Below are some additional reasons why students may struggle at Beverly Hills High School.

- They need help with study skills (understanding how, when and where to study).
- They may be upset about something at home, at school, or with peers that is interfering with their concentration.
- They may be suffering from depression.
- They may be taking a class that is too advanced.
- They may have a learning disability.
- They have low self-esteem and don’t believe that they can achieve.

Help your teens improve their grades

Even when the amount of effort invested in schoolwork is deficient, the underlying cause for lack of success in school may be discouragement, rather than laziness. Dialoging together is the most effective way to get teens thinking about strategies to solve their problems. Below are some suggestions to help your teen make academic improvements.

- Communicate with your teen. Ask him/her what he/she needs for improvements to be made and if they could use additional support. Some teens may not be able to articulate ideas; they may be overwhelmed and unable to come up with solutions. Let them know that you want to help them make improvements because you care.
- Review SnapGrades and contact your teen’s teachers to discuss any concerns or suggestions the teachers may have. Ask if the student is meeting with the teachers weekly if there is still no improvement. To register for SnapGrades parents can contact a BHHS teacher or guidance counselor for the necessary information.
- Get your teen academic support at school with Peer Tutoring in Room 292, Ext. 8292.
- Communicate with BHHS staff. Share your concerns and ask for suggestions from your teen’s teachers, counselors and/or other trusted staff members.
- Encourage your teen to visit the NormanAid Center to discuss any personal challenges that may be interfering with his/her academic performance.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEEN

“Don’t compare me to you when you were a teenager. Times are very different today!” BHHS student

A LOOK AT A TYPICAL NORMAN

As teenagers enter BHHS, they experience a number of changes and many parents question whether the changes they see in their teens are normal. Although every Beverly student is unique, there are many feelings and behaviors we consider to be most common adolescent behavior.

Practicing and preparing for adulthood – the ultimate form of separation is a task teens engage in almost daily. Parents often feel that their teen is distancing themselves from their family, when in reality they are simply exploring their independence and trying to find themselves. Teens are practicing how to make independent decisions and separate from their parents.

Figuring out who they are is a constant challenge in a teen’s life – students experiment and explore with their likes and dislikes, their social circle, and their future goals. Teens are trying to answer the question of “Who am I?” This is a huge question that they face each day; they work really hard on navigating through this stage toward self-understanding.

Teens are often preoccupied with how they look -Teens are often be motivated by appearance, image, and peer approval. This motivation helps teens feel secure and accepted.

Changing one's appearance. Styles come and go, and keeping up with trends is important for teenagers. Watch to make sure that changes are not terribly radical (such as excessive piercings) and that they are not accompanied by other disturbances of regular activities. For teenage girls, appearance may become especially important. They want to be attractive and trendy. However, it is important to watch for obsession with weight and changes in eating habits that result in dramatic weight loss.

Your teen may be more argumentative than they were as a child. He/she may push the limits on his/her curfew and household rules. Teens are practicing how to be independent which can result in an increase in defiance. Typical teen behavior may include accusations that you do not love him or her, that you are unfair, that all his or her friends get to do something, or that he or she hates you. However, with typical teen behavior, these arguments are not constant, nor do they become violent. Constant escalation, increasing defiance and defensiveness, violence, or ever-increasing frequency in arguments are signs of a troubled teen.

Typical teenage behavior comes with emotional ups and downs, as well as intervals of moodiness. Your teen may complain of having no friends one day or more and then go out on the weekend with friends. This is normal. The teen years are filled with uncertainty and magnified emotional responses. Watch for ongoing anxiety, sadness, or loneliness. This could indicate a real mental or emotional health problem.

How do parents create a space for teens to explore who they are and allow them to practice separation in a healthy way? These are really tough and big questions that most parents face daily; the answer comes down to communication. For information on how to effectively communicate with your teen to foster healthy self identity and healthy progressive separation, see page 25.

THE TEENAGE BRAIN

Many parents do not understand why their teenagers occasionally behave in an impulsive, irrational, or dangerous way. At times, it seems as if they don't think things through or fully consider the consequences of their actions. Adolescents differ from adults in the way they behave, solve problems, and make decisions. There is a biological explanation for this difference. Studies have shown that brains continue to mature and develop throughout childhood and adolescence and well into early adulthood.

Scientists have identified a specific region of the brain called the **amygdala** which is responsible for instinctual reactions including fear and aggressive behavior. This region develops early. However, **the frontal cortex**, the area of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act, develops later. This part of the brain is still changing and maturing well into adulthood.

Other specific changes in the brain during adolescence include a rapid increase in the connections between the brain cells and pruning (refinement) of brain pathways. Nerve cells develop myelin, an insulating layer which helps cells communicate. All these changes are essential for the development of coordinated thought, action, and behavior.

Changing brains mean that adolescents act differently from adults

Pictures of the brain in action show that adolescents' brains function differently than adults' brains when decision-making and problem solving. Teens' actions are guided more by the amygdala and less by the frontal cortex. Research has also demonstrated that exposure to drugs and alcohol before birth, head trauma, or other types of brain injuries can interfere with normal brain development during adolescence.

Based on the stage of their brain development, adolescents are more likely to do the following: act on impulse, misread or misinterpret social cues and emotions, get into accidents of all kinds, get involved in fights, engage in dangerous or risky behavior.

Adolescents are less likely to: think before they act, pause to consider the potential consequences of their actions, modify their dangerous or inappropriate behaviors.

These brain differences don't mean that young people can't make good decisions or tell the difference between right and wrong. The differences also don't mean that teens shouldn't be held responsible for their actions. However an awareness of these differences can help parents, teachers, advocates, and policy makers understand, anticipate, and manage the behavior of adolescents.

(The Teen Brain, 2008)

SELF-ESTEEM

DEFINING SELF-ESTEEM

We all have a mental picture of who we are, how we look, what we are good at, and what our weaknesses might be. We develop this picture over time, starting when we are very young. The term “self-image” is used to refer to a person’s mental picture of himself or herself. Much of our self-image is based on interactions we have with other people and is due to our life experiences. This mental picture contributes to our self-esteem. Self-esteem is how much we feel valued, loved and accepted by others – and how much we value, love and accept ourselves. Self-esteem is the collection of beliefs or feelings we have about ourselves. How we define ourselves influences our motivations, attitudes, and behaviors and effects or emotional adjustment. People with healthy self-esteem are able to feel good about themselves, appreciate their worth, and take pride in their abilities, skills and accomplishments. People with low self-esteem may feel as if no one will like them or accept them or that they can’t do anything well. We all experience problems with self-esteem at certain times in our lives – especially during our teen years when we are figuring out who we are and where we fit into the world. **The good news is that, because everyone’s self-image changes over time, self-esteem is not fixed for life. So, if a teen’s self-esteem isn’t all that it could be, he/she can improve it.**

How we feel about ourselves can influence how we live our lives. People who feel that they are likable and lovable have better relationships. They are more likely to ask for help and support from family and friends when they need it. People who believe they can accomplish goals and solve problems are more likely to do well in school. Having good self-esteem is the foundation for being able to live your life to the fullest. People with high self-esteem tend to have better relationships with peers and adults, feel happier, find it easier to deal with mistakes, disappointments, and failures, and are more likely to stick with something until they succeed. Self-esteem can take work but it is a skill one has for life! Adolescents who feel good about themselves seem to have an easier time handling conflicts and resisting negative pressures. They tend to smile more and enjoy life. These kids are realistic and generally optimistic. In contrast, kids with low self-esteem can find challenges to be sources of major anxiety and frustration. Those who think poorly of themselves have a difficult time finding solutions to problems. If given to self-critical thoughts such as, “I am no good” or “I can’t do anything right,” they may become passive, withdrawn, or depressed. Faced with a new challenge their immediate response is “I can’t.”

SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM:

- 1) Comments, such as “it doesn’t matter anyway” when referencing themselves.
- 2) Or commenting, “It’s not like it makes a difference” when noting the effect their behavior has on the world.
- 3) A teenager might become suddenly remarkably helpful or trying with great determination to please everyone around him/her.
- 4) They tend to be overly critical of and easily disappointed in themselves.
- 5) They may exhibit a low tolerance for frustration, giving up easily or waiting for someone else to take over.
- 6) They can start to see temporary setbacks as permanent and intolerable.

It is not often that we ask our teenagers the level of their self-esteem. It is typically not dinner conversation. However, if we are paying attention we can tell when their self-esteem is plummeting or drifting downward. These signs should not be ignored. A poor self-esteem can lead to poor performance, which can cycle negative feelings about oneself. These negative feelings can cause teens to make poor decisions, act out towards loved ones, and engage in risk-taking behaviors. Over time they can develop a defeatist attitude that can lead to depression.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR TEEN'S SELF-ESTEEM

- 1) **Watch what you say** – your kids are very sensitive to your words. Make sure to praise effort, not just the outcome.
- 2) **Identify and redirect your child's inaccurate beliefs** – It's important for you as parents to identify your kids' irrational beliefs about themselves, whether they're about perfection, attractiveness, ability or something else. Helping kids set more accurate standards and be more realistic in evaluating themselves will help them have a healthy self-concept. Inaccurate perceptions can start to become their reality.
- 3) **Be spontaneous and affectionate** – Your love will go a long way to boost your child's self-esteem. Give hugs and tell your kids you're proud of them.
- 4) **Give positive, accurate feedback** – Acknowledge your child's feelings, reward the choices they make, and encourage your child to make the right choice again next time. Comment on what they do well and how you are proud of them.
- 5) **Create a safe, loving home environment** – Respect is a key central theme to establishing a solid sense of self. Model respect with your loved ones so your kids can understand how important it is to treat others and themselves in a positive way.
- 6) **Encourage your teen to become active** – productivity is a big contributor to self-esteem, so encourage your teen to join a team, club, or an organization or become involved in his/her community.
- 7) **Take time to listen** – Respect your teen's competence as a growing adult. Give them the opportunity to express themselves and listen attentively. Try not to ask, "Why questions" such as "Why did you do that?" "Why did you say that?" Instead, come from a more curious, supportive place, such as "I am concerned about the choice that you made and how it has affected you. Can you help me understand what happened?"
- 8) **Help them set clear, attainable goals** – Accomplishing tasks can give a teen a boost of self-confidence. Help them set realistic goals.
- 9) **Foster a positive body image** – Encourage your child to make "healthy" choices for themselves and their bodies, and don't focus on any weight-related comments. Instead, utilize statements that focus on health.
- 10) **Be a positive role model** – Have your own self-esteem check-up and watch what you say and do. You are a major influence on your teen's self-esteem. Every time you put yourself down in front of your teen, your teen is learning how to view him/her self in a negative way. Nurture your own self-esteem and your child will have a great role model.

(Brook's, 2009)

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS REGARDING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Although we urge young people to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, our national surveys show that many do not heed our warnings. To prevent adolescents who do experiment from falling into abusive patterns, we need to create fallback strategies that focus on safety. Putting safety first requires that we are careful to provide our young people with credible information and resources. We also need to teach our teenagers how to identify and handle problems with alcohol and other drugs—if and when they occur—and how to get help and support. (Rosenbaum, 2007)

Experimentation with alcohol and drugs during high school is common. Unfortunately, teenagers don't often see the link between their actions today and the consequences tomorrow. They also have a tendency to feel indestructible and immune to the problems that others experience. Some teenagers abuse a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal. Legally available drugs include alcohol, prescribed medications, inhalants (fumes from glues, aerosols, and solvents) and over-the-counter cough, cold, sleep, and diet medications. The most commonly used illegal drugs are marijuana (pot), stimulants (cocaine, crack, and speed), LSD, PCP, opiates, heroin, and designer drugs (Ecstasy). The use of illegal drugs is increasing, especially among young teens. The average age of first marijuana use is 14, and alcohol use can start before age 12. The use of marijuana and alcohol in high school has become common. Drug use is associated with a variety of negative consequences, including increased risk of serious drug use later in life, school failure, and poor judgment which may put teens at risk for accidents, violence, unplanned and unsafe sex, and suicide. You can check out the facts on different substances and how they affect the body at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/index.php>.

- Learn the facts, risks and consequences of substance use and abuse.
- Listen to what your teens have to say about their lives, feelings and experiences.
- Communicate with your teens about drugs and alcohol.
- Develop a safety plan with your teen.
- Monitor alcohol use in your home – keep track of alcohol supply.
- Monitor household medication supply.
- Encourage your teen to entertain their friends when you are home; this way you can monitor their activities.
- Connect with other parents- getting to know your teen's friends can help you keep tabs on them.
- Keep track of your child's activities- know their plans and whereabouts. Have them agree to communicate with you while they are out. If they break the agreement, consider whether or not they should go out next time.
- Develop family rules and consequences
- Set a good example.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT SEX

“Don’t preach to me about your ideas, or religious views and outlook on sex,” I am coming from my own experience. Instead of lecturing me, educate me about safe sex.” BHHS student

Each year about one million teenage girls become pregnant in the United States and three million teens get a sexually transmitted disease. Children and adolescents need input and guidance from parents to help them make healthy and appropriate decisions regarding their sexual behavior since they can be confused and over stimulated by what they see and hear.

-American Academy of Child Psychiatry

Talking about sex with your teen is one of the more important jobs of parenthood. Teenagers need not only the biological basics they get in health classes - they need parental guidance, too. Thoughtful but honest talk about sexuality before sexual experimentation begins may also open lines of future communication about your teen's sexual concerns and behavior. If you're afraid of this subject and keep avoiding it, your teenager may develop the same attitude and may avoid discussion and sharing with you. Be honest and sensitive as you employ some of the following strategies for discussing sex with your teen:

Be proactive rather than reactive. Teens often say they'd like to discuss sex with their parents but can't seem to get the words out. Don't wait for your teen to come to you. Initiate the discussions yourself. Teens whose parents discuss sex openly with them are more likely to wait to have sexual intercourse than their uninformed counterparts. The issues of pregnancy and contraception are equally important for boys and girls to understand.

Give him/her permission to say “no.” If you issue an edict that “under no circumstances” is the teen to have intercourse, don't be surprised if he/she rebels by doing just that. On the other hand, teens are more likely to feel good about saying “no” if you help him/her understand why that is a wise option.

Avoid trying to scare your teen into abstinence. Help teens understand that sex is more than intercourse. Sex is an act that also involves the feelings of both partners. Let him/her know that there are ways to express sexuality without having intercourse before they are ready. Teens should be aware that it is not all or nothing. Teens can enjoy a physical relationship without having intercourse.

Respect Teens’ privacy. The minute your teen walks in the door from a date, don't demand to know what happened that evening. Let your teen know that you trust him/her. Stress, however, that if he/she is being sexually active or considering it, you expect him/her to behave responsibly.

Try to avoid overreacting. If your teen comes to you with a question about an STD, for example, don't automatically assume the adolescent has been exposed to the virus. Simply answer the question without accusations or jumping to conclusions. Later ask if there was a particular reason for the question. Use this topic as a way to keep channels open. Don't insist there must be some secretive reason for the curiosity.

(Talking to Your Kids About Sex, 2007)

PARENTS GUIDE TO HELPING THEIR TEEN DEAL WITH LGBT ISSUES

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender teens

Parents want to be good examples and models for their children. The best way to do this is to be prepared with ways to communicate effectively when your child comes to you with an issue they are struggling with. This will help them feel more secure, confident, and capable of navigating the uncertain territory ahead.

Some teenagers do not yet know whether they are LGBT and are afraid or confused about their sexual orientation. They may **not be ready** to come out to their parents or friends. If this is the case with your child, here are some things to say and not say when your child appears to be in question of their sexual orientation.

What TO say if your child does not say anything about being LGBT but you suspect they are:

- “I am here for you no matter what.”
- “I am here if you ever want to talk.”
- “We accept you no matter who you love.”

What NOT to say if your child does not say anything about being LGBT but you suspect they are:

- “I know you are gay or lesbian because you are acting like a”
- “I know you are LGBT because I saw you holding hands with your best friend...”
- “You must be LGBT because you are wearing clothes like that...”

On the other hand, some teenagers **KNOW** that they are LGBT and want to come out to their family and friends. This is so they can begin living their true self and not feel ashamed about who they are. Here are some things to say and not say when your child comes out to you as LGBT.

What TO say if your child comes out as LGBT:

- “That is great. We love you.”
- “You are so brave for telling us.”
- “We are here for you no matter who you love.”

What NOT to say if your child comes out as LGBT:

- “How long have you known and not told us?”
- “That is not how we raised you.”
- “We do not accept that as true. You must be going through a phase.”

Remember, if your teen comes out the best thing you can do is listen, accept that this is his/her reality and be a person that is on their side. In this day of bullying towards LGBT teenagers, it is even more important that a child’s parents are a source of comfort and support about who they are and not a contributing factor to their feelings of worthlessness, shame, and being “different.” Parents can really make a difference!

-Rachel Marks, Psy.D –BHHS counseling intern

INTERNET DRAMA

A huge part of Beverly's social scene includes internet usage. Teens use the internet as a source for keeping in touch with their friends, finding homework support, researching cool places to visit, or finding out the latest news. Social networking sites are the most popular internet usage among our students. One of the most visited social networking sites for BHHS teens is Facebook. Social networking sites have become part of BHHS high school culture. Students often use Facebook to promote artistic talents and experiment with other forms of content creation or work on group projects. Social networking can be positive as it allows teens to make connections and interact with others who share the same interests and goals. But kids can be spiteful and can use Facebook as a way to intentionally hurt, embarrass, or harass one another. **It is extremely important for parents to talk to their teens about responsible online behavior.** Keeping your teen safe online can protect him/her from potential bullying, predators, or misuse of information.

Teens using Facebook are creating a digital footprint that can live a long time online. And because teens can be impulsive, they are liable to say and do things on Facebook that they may later regret. It is easy for your teen's friends to forward anything that's posted on your teen's page, including instant message conversations, photos, videos or comments. What seemed important or funny in the moment may get teens into personal trouble now and professional trouble later.

"I would be Facebooking and texting all night if I could, but I don't need to, and I may not want to. When you set limits on technology, it takes the pressure off of me to choose (even if I am mad about the limits)." BHHS Student

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY

- Consider an internet usage contract that stipulates yours and your teen's responsibilities when using the internet.
- Discuss what is not appropriate to post online, text, or say over the internet.
- Talk with your teen about safely sharing photos. They should avoid emailing, texting, posting or sharing photos of something they are doing that could hurt them in the future.
- If you feel your teen is not responsible enough to practice safety while using the internet, you may want to place a computer in a common area in the house and/or frequently check the computer's Web browsers, which provide information on the websites that have been accessed.
- If they are on the giving end of cyber bullying, you must take away their privileges immediately.
- Understand and approve children's screen names—predators target sexually suggestive screen names.
- Talk about stalkers and predators on the Internet that use false identities.
- Discuss the dangers of face-to-face contact with someone met online.

(Dombrowski & Gischlar, 2011)

BULLYING

Bullying is intended hurtful behavior done by one or a group towards another. Bullies typically prey on those who appear weak, or less than them. They are more likely than non-bullies to be involved in vandalism, fighting, theft, substance abuse, truancy, or to have an arrest by young adulthood. Beverly Hills High school staff does its best to eliminate this behavior; unfortunately it occurs both with and without a teacher or another adult present. Many teens experience some kind of social humiliation; however, when it becomes damaging to a teen's self-esteem, it's gone too far. Victims can become withdrawn, depressed, and suicidal if it persists over a long period of time. On the other hand, those who are bullying need also to be helped as they usually are feeling a need to engage in this behavior.

Be alert to warning signs of bullying

Bullying	Being Bullied
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• previously accused of bullying elsewhere• gotten into trouble for fighting (physically or verbally) with others at school• easily frustrated, defiant or oppositional• witnessed your teen be aggressive• speak about others as "stupid" or uses negative terms to describe others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• reluctant to go to school• silent/non-communicative about what's going on at school• often loses personal objects or possessions• might say "everybody picks on me"• shows low-self esteem

How to help your child deal with being bullied:

Empower your teen. When a teen is bullied they are being victimized. Victims feel helpless and powerless. The key to navigating through this incredibly difficult experience is to help your child find their own voice of how they want to respond to the bully. Allow them the chance to brainstorm ideas of what they can do and respect their decisions (as long as it does not involve retaliation to the bully or the bully's family) of how they want to handle being bullied. Empower your teen by communicating to them that their voice and opinion matters. Giving them a voice helps to decrease the feelings of victimization. Having your teen make decisions about how to handle their bully alleviates some of the feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. As parents, you can't control what the bully does but you can help your teen realize that they do have a voice and power over how to respond.

The do's and don'ts of how to help your child handle being bullied:

- 1) **Listen to what your child has to say:** Being a good listener is an essential role in helping your child. A great question to ask is, "What can I do to be helpful?" An important part of being a good listener is not placing blame on your child. Blaming them actually re-victimizes your child. Don't try and find a reason of why your child is being bullied. There is not good reason and there is no excuse for the bullying! Your goal is to continue to have your child open up to you and feel heard and supported.
- 2) **If you were bullied as a child, try not to use your experience as a way to make your teen feel better:** This conversation is not about you; it is about your child and their experiences. It is ok to share how you felt when you were bullied but stay away from reassuring them that everything will end up ok. Remember what adults said to you that felt helpful and not helpful.
- 3) **Communicate with your child about their choices of how to respond to the bully:** Help your teen create a list of options and then practice in a role-play fashion of how to handle the situations in the moment. Empower and respect your teen's ideas of how they want to handle it. Their voice and decisions are what matters!
- 4) **If the bullying is happening at school or is causing your teen to be scared at school seek out a counselor, peer counselor or administrator for help:** Helping your child find an advocate and supportive voice at school can help your child not feel alone.
- 5) **Take your child's side:** Support their feelings and reaffirm that you are completely on their side through every step of this.
- 6) **Find something that your child is really good at:** Make sure your child does not skip out on the activities that they enjoy and that help their self-esteem. This allows for positive aspects in their life to counter the negative devastation of being bullied.
- 7) **Teach them that the bully can make them upset, sad, lonely, frustrated, angry and scared BUT they don't have the right to make them feel this way all day every day:** Empower your teen to not give the bully too much power. Help your teen take back the power by working with them to understand that a bully tries to be the powerful one. Help your teen realize that the bully should not affect the way your teen feels about him/her self.

How to help your child who is bullying:

- Discuss school rules and behavior expectations: what's acceptable and unacceptable.
- Inform your teen that bullying can lead to suspension or expulsion.
- Find out: What it is that your child has been doing, *accused* of doing, or *admits* to doing?
- Explain to your child why bullying behavior is unacceptable.
- Be aware of your own aggressive behaviors and how you handle them.
- Know what triggers your teens aggressive behavior.
- Discuss alternatives to aggressive behavior with your child and how it feels to be bullied, asking for help, respecting others, and showing tolerance for those who are different.
- Praise your child for using alternative, appropriate behavior.
- Establish rules and consequences for these types of behaviors
- Seek outside help. Dealing with bullying behavior is difficult.

RECOGNIZING RISKY TEEN BEHAVIORS

As parents you will see your teenager ride a wave of emotions, thoughts, questions, social distractions, and personal growth. We have observed that some Beverly students may feel that while riding that wave, they occasionally sink. It's not to say that these students are any less capable than their peers however, they may need extra support, if their ride falls off track. In some cases students become overwhelmed because of pressures at home, school, with their peers and in society in general. This overwhelming sensation can lead your teen in to an unhealthy frame of mind and to some common risky behaviors. Research suggests that certain risky behaviors are more common than others in the teenage years. For this reason, we will give our focus to; depression, substance abuse, self-injury and suicide.

“Trust your instincts, which are to love your kids enough to give them the space to explore and grow, forgive their mistakes and to accept them for who they are. Kids go through tough times, sometimes, seemingly prolonged. Those who make it do so because they're embraced and loved by their families.” (Rosenbaum, 2007)

RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Does your teen's behavior make you worry about his/her safety?
2. Is your teen experiencing trouble at school? (suspension, truancy, grades)
3. Does your teen lack self-esteem and self-worth?
4. Is your teen using or experimenting with drugs and alcohol?
5. Does your teen display violent behavior?
6. Has your teen had problems with the law?
7. Do you worry your teen may not finish high school?
8. Does your teen have trouble with authority?
9. Does your teen seem unmotivated or depressed?
10. Do you suspect your teen lies or is dishonest with you?
11. Has your teen ever displayed evidence of suicidal ideas?
12. Do you worry about your teen's future?
13. Despite rules and consequences, do you feel your teen will defy them?
14. Are you exhausted from your teen's defiant behavior & choices?
15. Do you feel powerless when dealing with your teen?

Count your "yes" answers to the above questions. Assess your teen's level of risk and consider the suggested interventions below.

10+: Your teen is a high risk, get help. Talk with your doctor or a member of BHHS support staff.

5-9: Consider making changes at home, by strengthening rules and structure. Talk with BHHS support staff for more suggestions.

Up to 4: Your teen is a moderate risk. Work on improving family rules and consistency in your follow through, as well as improving family communication.

(“Risky Teen Behavior,” 2011)

DEPRESSION

Unfortunately depression is not only very common in our society as a whole, but also affects our high school teens. It can affect all students; however some may be more at risk given certain situations. Because depression can affect all students in different areas of their lives, it's important to be aware of the signs. Teens, who experience depression, need ways to escape from the troubles bothering them. This can then lead them to engage in harmful activities or behaviors that are not good for them. As a parent, it's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of depression. If you suspect your child is experiencing this deep sadness consider some of the symptoms below.

<u>Symptoms of depression</u>
Anger, aggression, and/or rage
Irritability/ Trouble concentrating
Sadness
Helplessness
Extreme tiredness or trouble sleeping
Changes in eating habit
Feels that "nothing is going right"
Quitting regular planned activities
Distance from friends

You also want to keep in mind, that while you suspect your child may be depressed, symptoms or signs have to...

- have lasted for more than two to four weeks
- interfere with schoolwork or relationships
- be frequent, even if they last just a short time when they appear.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEENAGE AND ADULT DEPRESSION

Depression in teens can look very different from depression in adults. The following symptoms of depression are more common in teenagers than in their adult counterparts:

- **Irritable or angry mood** –irritability, rather than sadness, is often the predominant mood in depressed teens. A depressed teenager may be grumpy, hostile, easily frustrated, or prone to angry outbursts.
- **Unexplained aches and pains** – Depressed teens frequently complain about physical ailments such as headaches or stomachaches. If a thorough physical exam does not reveal a medical cause, these aches and pains may indicate depression.
- **Extreme sensitivity to criticism** – Depressed teens are plagued by feelings of worthlessness, making them extremely vulnerable to criticism, rejection, and failure. This is a particular problem for "over-achievers."
- **Withdrawing from some, but not all people** – While adults tend to isolate themselves when depressed, teenagers usually keep up at least some friendships. However, teens with depression may socialize less than before, pull away from their parents, or start hanging out with a different crowd.

Helping a depressed teenager

If you suspect that a teenager in your life is suffering from depression, take action right away. Depression is very damaging when left untreated, so don't wait and just hope that the symptoms will go away, even if you're unsure that depression is the issue, the troublesome behaviors and emotions you're seeing in your teenager are signs of a problem. Whether or not that problem turns out to be depression, it still needs to be addressed—the sooner the better.

The first thing you should do if you suspect depression is to talk to your teen about it. In a loving and non-judgmental way, share your concerns with your teenager. Let him or her know what specific signs of depression you've noticed and why they worry you. Then encourage your child to open up about what he or she is going through.

Tips for talking to a depressed teen

Offer support

Let depressed teenagers know that you're there for them, fully and unconditionally. Hold back from asking a lot of questions (teenagers don't like to feel patronized or crowded), but make it clear that you're ready and willing to provide whatever support they need.

Be gentle but persistent

Don't give up if your adolescent shuts you out at first. Talking about depression can be very tough for teens. Be respectful of your child's comfort level while still emphasizing your concern and willingness to listen.

Listen without lecturing

Resist any urge to criticize or pass judgment once your teenager begins to talk. The important thing is that your child is communicating. Avoid offering unsolicited advice or ultimatums as well.

Validate feelings

Don't try to talk teens out of their depression, even if their feelings or concerns appear silly or irrational to you. Simply acknowledge the pain and sadness they are feeling. If you don't, they will feel like you don't take their emotions seriously.

If your teen claims nothing is wrong, but has no explanation for what is causing the depressed behavior, you should trust your instincts. Remember that denial is a strong emotion. Furthermore, teenagers may not believe that what they're experiencing is the result of depression. If you see depression's warning signs, seek professional help. Neither you nor your teen is qualified to either diagnosis depression or rule it out, so see a doctor or psychologist who can.

(Teen Depression: A Guide for Parents and Teachers, Helpguide.org)

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

While some teens will experiment with alcohol and other drugs and stop, or continue to use occasionally, without significant problems, others will develop a dependency, moving on to more dangerous drugs and causing significant harm to themselves and possibly others. It is difficult to know which teens will experiment and stop and which will develop serious problems. Teenagers at risk for developing serious alcohol and drug problems include those:

- with a family history of substance abuse
- who are depressed
- who have low self-esteem, and
- who feel like they don't fit in or are out of the mainstream

There are many factors that can initiate substance abuse. However, many of the signs can be identified early by family and friends. It's also important to note that some teens can exhibit these signs but may not necessarily be using, or abusing substances.

Signs of alcohol and other drug abuse

- Deteriorating relationships with family
- Behavior changes: such as withdrawal, hostility, verbal abuse or unreasonable belligerence
- Isolation for a long period of time
- Truancy, drop in grades, behavior problems, skipping class, consistent tardiness
- Deteriorating relationships with old friends, suddenly making new friends
- Secretive about certain friends
- Developing a network of friends who are using alcohol or other drugs
- Loss of interest in sports or other once-favored activities
- Basic personality changes
- Inexplicable and sudden mood changes; apathy
- Less capable of coping with frustration than use to
- Memory problems, looks confused or "spacey"
- Fatigue or hyper behavior; difficulty walking
- Sleep disturbances
- Red/blood-shot eyes, runny nose
- Carelessness with grooming/ drastic change in dress, make-up, music
- Disappearance of alcohol or medication
- Money or valuables missing, or excess money
- Use of cigarettes
- Signs of drug paraphernalia
- Use of incense

*If you suspect your child may be addicted to drugs or alcohol, seek help from a doctor or a member of the BHHS support staff.

SELF- INJURY

What is it?

Self-injury typically occurs when teens are presented with a number of overwhelming and stressful situations. As parents, it's important to remember that it's all relative. What may not seem to be overwhelming to you may easily be the most challenging thing your teen is trying to cope with. So please remember that teens do have real stressors, some more manageable than others. What happens when your teen is unable to handle their overwhelming circumstances? In some cases, it can lead to self- injury. Being aware is the first step in recognizing how you can help your teen if ever they were to engage in this behavior. Self-injury is not suicidal behavior. There can be many factors that lead students to engage in self-harming behaviors. Listed below are some of those factors. More important is to understand why a teen engages in self-injurious behaviors. First and foremost it provides an outlet for pain relief of intense feelings, pressures or anxieties. This masks the pain they are feeling on the inside. When a teen resorts to this style of coping, it's a definite red flag that they are overwhelmed with emotion, as well as are showing a definite cry for help. Self-injury provides a sense of control by being able to injure when they want. Since they cannot control external stimuli, control of body harm becomes a replacement. It also can be a way of punishing themselves for certain characteristics, feelings, or thoughts they may have.

If your teen is practicing self-injury, he/she is in pain and is telling you the best way that he/she knows how. The following poem was written by a self –injurer that provides insight into the world of a self-injurer.

*How will you know I'm hurting
if you cannot see my pain?
To wear it on my body
tells words i cannot explain.
-C. Blout*

Students who are at risk may possess the following characteristics:

- A history of emotional or physical abuse
- Low self- esteem
- Lack skills to expresses their emotions
- Lack a healthy, supportive, non-judgmental environment to express their feelings.

The reasons why someone self-injures:

- Relief from psychological pain or release of mounting tension
- Inability to feel or feeling too much
- Inability to handle any kind of feeling-good or bad
- Wanting to feel something
- Expressing anger

Levander, 2004

Signs of self-injury:

- Frequent or unexplained bruises, scars, cuts, or burns.
- Wearing long pants and sleeves in warm weather. Consistent, inappropriate use of clothing designed to conceal wounds (often found on the arms, thighs, abdomen).
- Secretive behaviors, spending unusual amounts of time in the bathroom or isolated areas.
- Bruises on the neck, headaches, red eyes, ropes/clothing/belts tied in knots (signs of the “choking game”).
- General signs of depression, social-emotional isolation and disconnectedness.
- Possession of sharp implements (razor blades, shards of glass, thumb tacks, clips).
- Evidence of self-injury in work samples, journals, art projects.

As a parent, what can i do to help my teen who self-injures?

Do’s:

- Connect with compassion, calm and caring.
- Understand that this is his/her way of coping with pain.
- Refer your teen to his/her school counselor, psychologist, or intervention counselor.
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and outreach in the community (e.g. volunteering with animals, nursing homes, tutoring or mentoring).

Don’t:

- Act shocked, overreact, say or do anything to cause guilt or shame.
- Discourage self-injury, threaten hospitalization or use punishment.
- Act shocked, overreact, say or do anything to cause guilt or shame.
- Publicly humiliate the student or talk about their SI in front of class or peers.
- Agree to hold SI behavior confidential.
- Make deals or promises you can’t keep in an effort to stop behavior.

Parents can show their support by:

- **Attending to the subject of self-injury.** Let it be known that you are willing to talk, and then follow your teen’s lead. Tell your teen that if you don’t bring the subject up, it’s because you’re respecting their space, not because of aversion.
- **Make the initial approach.** “I know that sometimes you hurt yourself and I’d like to understand it. People do it for many reasons; if you could help me understand yours, I’d be grateful.” Don’t push it after that; if your teen says they’d rather not talk about it, accept this gracefully and drop the subject, perhaps reminding them that you are willing to listen if they ever do want to talk about it.
- **Be available.** You can’t be supportive of someone if you can’t be reached.
- **Make it clear from your behavior that your teen doesn’t need to self-injure in order to get displays of love and caring from you.** Be free with loving, caring gestures, even if they aren’t returned always (or often enough). Don’t withdraw your love from your teen. The ways to avoid reinforcing SI is to be consistently caring, so that helping your teen take care of her/him after they injure is nothing special or extraordinary.
- **Provide distractions if necessary.** Sometimes just being distracted (taken to a movie, on a walk, or out for ice cream; talked to about things that have nothing to do with self-injury) can work wonders.

Levander, 2004

SUICIDE

Suicide can be a very sensitive topic to discuss. There are many reasons that lead teens to think suicide is their only way out. Suicide ideations and/or attempts are a desperate cry for help. Teens who consider suicide need support and an outlet to express their feelings. The Los Angeles County Youth Suicidal Prevention Project has created a guideline to help parents whose teens express feelings of suicidal ideation.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Youth Suicide in the United States

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth aged 10-24 in the United States.*
- In recent years more young people have died from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, congenital birth defects, and diabetes combined.*
- For every young person who dies by suicide, between 100-200 attempt suicide.*
- Males are four times as likely to die by suicide as females - although females attempt suicide three times as often as males.*

SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE

Here is what you can do:

- **Talk** to your child about suicide, don't be afraid, you will not be "putting ideas into their heads." **Asking for help** is the single skill that will protect your child. **Help your child** to identify and connect to caring adults to talk to when they need guidance and support.
- **Know** the risk factors and warning signs of suicide.
- **Remain calm.** Establish a safe environment to talk about suicide.
- **Listen** without judging. Allow for the discussion of experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Be prepared for expression of intense feelings. Try to understand the reasons for considering suicide without taking a position about whether or not such behavior is justified. Ask open-ended questions.
- **Supervise** constantly. Do not leave your child alone if they express suicidal ideation.
- **Ask** if your child has a plan to kill themselves, and if so, remove means. As long as it does not put the caregiver in danger, attempt to remove the suicide means such as a firearm, knife or pills.
- **Take Action.** It is crucial to get professional help for your child and the entire family. When you are close to a situation it is often hard to see it clearly. You may not be able to solve the problem yourself.
- Help may be found at a suicide prevention center, local mental health agency, and family service agency or through your clergy.
- Support is available through Beverly Hills High School support staff.

Youth Suicide Risk Factors:

While the path that leads to suicidal behavior is long and complex and there is no “profile” that predicts suicidal behavior with certainty, there are certain risk factors associated with increased suicide risk. In isolation, these factors are not signs of suicidal thinking. However, when present they signal the need to be vigilant for the warning signs of suicide. In addition, they are also appropriate targets for suicide prevention programs. Specifically, these risk factors include the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History of depression, mental illness or substance/alcohol abuse disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family history of suicide or suicide in community
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presence of a fire arm or rope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hopelessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolation or lack of social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impulsivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Situational crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incarceration

Suicide Warning Signs:

Warning signs are observable behaviors that may signal the presence of suicidal thinking. They might be considered “cries for help” or “invitations to intervene.” These warning signs signal the need to inquire directly about whether the individual has thoughts of suicide. If such thinking is acknowledged, then suicide interventions will be required. Warning signs include the following:

- **Suicide threats.** It has been estimated that up to 80% of all suicide victims have given some clues regarding their intentions. Both direct (“I want to kill myself”) and indirect (“I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up”) threats need to be taken seriously.
- **Suicide notes and plans.** The presence of a suicide note is a very significant sign of danger. The greater the planning revealed by the youth, the greater the risk of suicidal behavior.
- **Prior suicidal behavior.** Prior behavior is a powerful predictor of future behavior. Thus anyone with a history of suicidal behavior should be carefully observed for future suicidal behavior.
- **Making funeral arrangements.** Making funeral arrangements, writing a will, and/or giving away prized possessions may be warning signs of impending suicidal behavior.
- **Preoccupation with death.** Excessive talking, drawing, reading, and/or writing about death may suggest suicidal thinking.
- **Changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts, and/or feelings.** Depression (especially when combined with hopelessness), sudden happiness (especially when preceded by significant depression), a move toward social isolation, giving away personal possessions, and reduced interest in previously important activities are among the changes considered to be suicide warning signs.

(Lieberman,2008)

TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEEN

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEEN:

“When you nag at me it’s hard for me to listen to you; please communicate with me calmly.” BHHS student

An excellent book for tools on how to communicate with your teen is, “How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk” by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

1) Acknowledge and validate your teen’s feeling

- Parents often skip over what their teen is trying to tell them and they jump right in to parenting. The best way to let your teen know you are listening is by validating them.
- Don’t try and convince your teen to feel a different way or tell them they are over-reacting or over-emotional. This shuts down the dialogue immediately!
- Teens do not choose their feelings – feelings are not like a light switch that can be turned on or off. By validating teen’s feelings, parents open the door for dialogue and increase the chances of communication.

2) Share how you feel – using “I” Statements

- After you validate your teen’s feelings, it is ok to then share yours.
- Focus on “I” statements vs “You” statements. “You” statements will put them on the defensive and close down the conversation immediately. “What I hear you saying really concerns me. I am sorry that you and your friend are fighting but I feel worried about how upset you are.” Rather “you” statement, “You always get so caught up in this stuff. Let it go, it is not that big of a deal.”

3) Don’t blame and attack

- By blaming teens they may feel attacked and they will either stop communicating and shut down or start defending themselves by attacking back. Come from a place of curiosity to get a better understanding of what happened
- Blaming – “Why did you do that?”- Rather than. “I am confused how that ended up happening. We agreed upon an 11 o’clock curfew and you came home at 12. Can you help me understand what happened?”

4) Find the teachable moment

- Give Information
- “I understand that most of your friends are going to parties and drinking but I am really struggling with being ok with this because when alcohol gets involved I know how much an increase there is in risky behavior.”

5) State your expectations

- Be clear on what you are expecting from them so they know what limits they are working within. “I expect you will be home by 11 and if you can’t make it by 11, I expect you to text or call by 10:30 to ask permission to stay out later.”
- It is really helpful to let teens know what is expected of them so they can make choices in relation to what has been clearly communicated.

(Brook’s, 2011)

When teens stop talking.

“The worst time to try to talk to me is when I am mad at you. Wait until I calm down.” BHHS student

Communicating with your teen is essential for sharing information and keeping your teen safe. However, this may not be easy. Talking to parents may not be your teen’s number one priority. Although it may seem hurtful, it doesn’t necessarily mean your teen is ignoring you.

So how do you get your teen to start talking?

Teens will usually open up to those whom they don’t feel threatened or judged by. The key is to be open and accepting. Even if they make a mistake, make an effort to approach the situation in a caring manner. Getting angry or upset quickly will turn your teen off. Time and time again we hear Beverly students say “I can’t talk to my parents, they don’t listen and they don’t understand.” There are many reasons teens are reluctant to not only communicate with parents, but adults in general. When this happens communicate to your teen that you will be there when they are ready to talk.

Reasons why your teen may not talk...

- They are embarrassed about their thoughts and feelings
- They feel pressured at home or school
- They are afraid of what consequences might be

Some teens might find it difficult to initiate conversation with you. Take this opportunity to open up that line of communication. If you notice your child looks upset, sad, or even happy, let them know that you can see that. Even more so if you sense a crucial matter or increasing emotions, don’t wait for a crisis to initiate conversation. Although your teen might find it difficult to talk about tough topics such as prevalent pressures and temptations, it’s ultimately your job to keep them safe.

Tips for keeping the line of communication open:

As parents, you want to listen as much as possible to know what your child is experiencing. If your expression is non-judgmental, teenagers will be more apt to open up and seek your guidance and opinions. The greatest challenge is to listen, while trying to help without imposing your beliefs, values or opinions. A useful venue for listening is the dinner table. If possible try to eat together at least once a day to catch up and connect with your teen.

Choose an appropriate time to communicate.

- Times you may not want to have a discussion are: when teens are getting ready, doing homework, before they go to sleep, or other times that they appear busy or distracted.
- Remember; do make it a conversation, not a lecture! The moment you sound angry and disciplinary, your teen will immediately be turned off.

Someone Your Teens Can Talk to

Try to establish strong communication with your teen, but remember that some teens may talk more openly about sensitive topics with someone who is not a parent. Try not to let this hurt your feelings; remember that your child will respect you more in the long run if you encourage him or her to talk with someone else, if that is what works best.

“Don’t be upset if I talk to another adult about my problems and not you. It’s just easier to talk to someone else. I know you care, but I don’t want you to worry about me.” BHHS Student

Today’s teens, more than ever before, need to connect with adults— if not a parent, then a coach, clergy member, teacher, school counselor, therapist or other trusted adults in their lives. Teens need an adult with whom they can talk openly. They should not be left to rely solely on other teens for important information, conversation, and help with problem solving about how to grow up wisely.

Parents are encouraged to have a discussion with their teens about the mental health services BHHS has to offer. It would be helpful if parents tell their teens that they have permission to use these services if they are needed and that there is nothing to be ashamed of.

Communicate that if they work with a mental health professional you will not ask them questions as to what they discussed. Teens need to know that their parents want them to share their emotions and will be given the privacy to do so. We see too many students who are in need of counseling but do not feel comfortable asking their parents to give them consent to

work with a therapist at the school or outside of the school. As a result these students are not able to benefit from our support services. They may feel as if there is no one to talk to or rely solely on other teens for important information, conversation and help with problem solving. The lack of intervention could increase the risks of your teen engaging in risky behaviors.

Some teens may not feel comfortable receiving counseling from the NormanAid Center and/or some teens may need outside services; talk with your guidance or BHHS intervention counselor if you would like a list of referrals.

“Even the best informed teens are constantly tested by social pressures, emotional needs and their peers. A caring adult can make all the difference in a child’s life” BHHS counselor

NormanAid Resources

If you are concerned for your child we **STRONGLY** encourage you to communicate with someone from Beverly Hills High School support staff: guidance counselor, intervention counselor, school psychologist or an administrator.

Please note that Beverly Hills High School's support staff is here to guide and help parents and their families. We understand that these concerns are private and may be difficult to discuss. We would **NEVER** share this information with colleges, employers or other staff members. Because your child's safety is our number one priority, we may need to consult with colleagues or break confidentiality if we are concerned that a student is harming themselves, someone else, or someone is hurting them.

NORMANAID STUDENT SUPPORT CENTER

The NormanAid Center provides confidential mental health services such as intervention counseling, peer counseling, conflict mediation, self-help library, Beverly Buddies and Maple Center Counseling.

Room 288 Ext. 8717

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry supports school-based mental health services for adolescents and states, "*Easy access to psychiatric services is key to early identification, intervention, and treatment for students affected by emotional, behavioral and mental disorders. School-based mental health clinics provide this important access. They are the new frontier for the 21st century.*"

We are very fortunate to have the NormanAid Center. Our students strongly benefit from the support given by Intervention, Peer and Maple Counseling.

We urge parents and teens to reach out when needed.

REFERENCES

- Bray , A. Melissa, Mahri J. Elinoff, Kari A. Sassu , and Thomas J. Kehle. “*Bullies and Victims: Information for Parents.*” nasponline.org. National Association of School Psychologists, 2004. Web. 17 Mar 2011.
- Brooks, Danielle. *Navigating the Beverly Social Scene.* Beverly Hills High School. Beverly Hills, CA. 21 Mar.2011. Guest Lecture.
- Brooks, Danielle. *Self-Esteem and Parenting Tips.* Beverly Hills High School. Beverly Hills, CA. 8 Jan 2009. Guest Lecture.
- Dombrowski, C. Stefan and Karen L Gischlar. “*Keeping Children Safe on the Internet: Guidelines for Parents.*” nasponline.org. National Association of School Psychologists, 2004. Web. 17 Mar. 2011.
- Helping Your Children Navigate Their Teenage Years: A Guide for Parents.* White House Council on Youth Violence, 2000.
- Levander, Andrew. *Self- injurious Behavior: Assessment, Treatment and the Recovery Process.* Cross Nashville: Cross Country Education, 2004. Print
- Liberman, Richard. “*Intervening with Self-Injurious Youth.*” nasponline.org. Los Angeles Unified School District Student Health and Human Services, 2008. Web. 17 Mar 2011.
- O’Brian, Linda. *High School Parent Guidebook.* Dayton: Woodburn Press, 2010. Print.
- Parenting for Today: Who’s in Charge. Perf. Lee Hausner. Wellspring Media, 1995.
- “*Parents-Intervention Guidelines.*” preventsuicide.lacoe.edu. Los Angeles County Youth Suicide Prevention Project, 2010. Web. 17 Mar 2011.
- Rosenbaum, Marsha. *Safety First: A Reality Based Approach To Teens and Drugs.* San Francisco: Studio Reflex, 2007.

Risky Teen Behavior. TroubledTeen101.com. Troubled Teen, 2009. Web.17 Mar 2011.

Talking to Your Kids About Sex. Washington: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2005. Print.

Teen Depression: A guide for Parents and Teachers. Helpguide.org. Help Guide, 2001-2011. Web. 31 Mar 2011.

The Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making. Washington: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2008. Print.

United States. National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism. *Make a Difference Talk to Your Child About Alcohol*. Maryland, 2002.

What to Expect From Your Teen. La Jolla: Family and Relationship Center Print.