

ADVICE TO FRESHMAN PARENTS FROM SENIOR PARENTS

First and foremost – **make connections with other parents**. Cultivate friendships with the parents of your child's peers and create opportunities to get together. Kids actually enjoy seeing parents getting to know one another. They may be a little worried we'll talk about them too much. Be sure you don't share personal discussions with your child with other friends, it does have a way of getting back to them. Particularly sensitive are areas around boy/girl issues. But after high school is over, you'll all have wonderful friends who'll understand why you can't clean your child's room after they leave for college because you miss them so much!

When your child asks to go to a friend's for the evening or a **sleepover**, don't hesitate to **call the parent(s)** to make sure it's convenient for them and that someone is going to be home. They may say they'll be out, but allow their child to have a friend(s) over. You have to know your child and decide your comfort level with this.

When you pick up your child, **go to the door**, rather than wait in the car. That gives you the opportunity to meet and establish a connection with another parent. Let them know you appreciate communication with one another. Your child may be annoyed at first, but as this becomes a part of the parent culture, kids will expect it.

If your child is going out at night, make sure that the **curfew** is clearly spelled out (10-11pm is reasonable for freshman.) Make sure plans have been made in advance for return transportation. Both you and your child should know how they are getting home, and they should call you and get permission if there are any changes. Sketchy rides home are high risk!

If an incident occurs **when your child gets in trouble** with another student (i.e., caught drinking, staying out after curfew, smoking, etc.) consider contacting the other parents to see if you all can **arrange to meet** together WITH all the kids. Getting in trouble is bad enough, but to have other parents expressing their concern is a powerful experience for kids. It also shows you're all invested in these kids, and you're all going to be working towards helping them make safer decisions for themselves. Having the kids get other parents' perspectives is an eye-opener for them too. For parents, you have a chance to get to know both student and parents at another level. It may initially be uncomfortable for all, but in the end it will be enormously helpful. A social worker from the BHS Drug and Alcohol Prevention Program can help with this.

Make sure you let other parents know that if they hear something that concerns them about your child, **you want to know**. If a culture of support and caring develops NOW, it will be invaluable.

You may learn a lot about what your child DOESN'T or CAN'T talk to you about by **chatting with one of your child's friends** who likes to talk to adults. Kids often feel more comfortable discussing issues with someone who's not their parent.

Probably one of the most important things to remember: **HUMOR**. If you're naturally looking at the world with a light eye, this time will be so much easier. If that's hard, reach out to other parents who can help you lighten up. It makes it easier to get along with a teenager, takes some of the stress away and relaxes everyone. A terrific book about teens is "Just Sedate Me," a collection of essays about raising teens by writers like Anna Quinlen and Dave Barry. It's poignant, hysterically funny and incredibly honest. A great book to have on the shelf during these next four years!

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B-PEN (Brookline Parent Education Network) helps parents navigate the common social, emotional and developmental challenges of adolescence via parent network meetings, presentations, print/electronic materials, and resource information. For more information on **B-PEN** or for help starting a parent network, visit www.B-PEN.org or contact coordinators: June Harris june_harris@psbma.org or Karen Campbell karen_campbell@psbma.org