

the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

“Information is giving out; communication is getting through.” – Sydney Harris

My parents now know I drink and mistakenly think I abuse alcohol a lot. What do I say to them when I return home for Thanksgiving?

Kudos for wanting to talk with your parents about this. Navigating family conversations can range from easy exchanges to atomic-sized meltdowns. The good news is that you have a very big say in how the dialogue goes.

KEY POINTS:

Plan ahead. Anticipate your parents' reactions. Stay calm and think about possible thoughtful responses.

Timing. Find a quiet and opportune time to talk.

Be genuine. Keep the tone of your voice respectful. Avoid “attitude.” Acknowledge possible awkward feelings approaching the conversation but stay positive. Start off with, “I want to talk about my alcohol use now that I am in college and also hear your concerns about it.”

Be empathetic. Respect their thoughts, feelings, and concerns. Your parent's number one concern is your safety. Now that you are in college they feel less able to keep you safe. They also may fear you won't succeed. Hear them out. You might

ask them, “How did you navigate drinking when you were in college or when you were my age?”

Stick to the topic. Know what you want to say. If you want to let them know that you can drink responsibly, give concrete examples of how you do that. Be sure to share how you will keep yourself as safe as possible if you do over-consume, (e.g. designated driver, sober buddy, etc.)

Keep it constructive. Avoid or recognize when you or your parents are getting defensive. Don't storm out of the room or lash out verbally! Be prepared to stop and revisit the topic later. Given time, perceptions may change and feelings usually calm down. Even if you end up disagreeing, you'll understand each other better.

However, if your conversation follows its intended outcome you will have created a mutually beneficial environment of open communication. This will make it more comfortable to return home and could open your family up to other adult conversations. And that is absolutely rewarding!

Got a question about alcohol? Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu



**CAMPUS
HEALTH**

The Red Cup Q&A is written by Lynn Reyes, LCSW, LISAC, David Salafsky, MPH, Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, Spencer Gorin, RN, and Christiana Castillo, MPH, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.