

# For healthy break-ups, talking, not tweeting

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At summit hosted at Northeastern, teens discussed ways to end their relationships responsibly, as well as the perils of posting the details on social networking sites. Credit: Mary Knox Merrill.

Boston teens got a solid piece of advice for dealing with break-ups last week: “Face it, don’t Facebook it.”

At the second annual Break-Up Summit, organized by the Boston Public Health Commission’s (BPHC) Start Strong Initiative in partnership with Northeastern University, teens discussed healthy ways to end relationships, such as communicating in person rather than via text message or social networking sites.

The event stressed that break-ups could happen in ways that were not traumatic or destructive – something many teens said they had never even considered before the session.

“Before last summer, I didn’t even know there was such a thing as a healthy break-up,” said one teen, describing her experience at last summer’s Break-Up Summit during an opening video for the daylong event, held last week in Northeastern’s Curry Student Center.

Casey Corcoran, director of the Start Smart Initiative, said the some 200 teens in attendance from Boston and the surrounding areas could learn important lessons they could then share with the friends, hopefully prompting a change in teen dating culture. Too many turn to the Internet after a relationship ends, spreading gossip and mistruths about an ex.

“Why we’re here is because people are not talking about break-ups as much as we should be. We kind of know the answer why, and it kind of falls on us as adults. We have not done a good enough job talking about break-ups, sharing our own experiences and the skills that lead to healthy break-ups,” Corcoran said. “If you’re someone who wants to be engaged in a committed and healthy relationship, that also means that you should be engaged and committed to healthy break-ups.”

One session, led by moderator Darrus Sands of the BPHC, asked teens to answer poll questions about their relationships via text message, with the results updated on a large screen.

In response to one question, two-thirds said they did not have strong examples of a healthy break-up from their communities or popular culture. Just a fraction said they ended relationships in person, with many more saying they ended through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, with word passed by a friend, or some other indirect method.

Shan Mohammed, an associate clinical professor in the Bouvé College of Health Services, said hosting the event fits in with Northeastern’s ongoing work to promote healthy behaviors in Boston and other urban

areas.

“We think this is a phenomenal project and each of you plays an important role in keeping yourself healthy, keeping your families healthy, and keeping your communities healthy,” Mohammed said at start of the summit.

Provided by Northeastern University

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