REAL TALK

let's be real

THE HOW-TO GUIDE
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1: GET STARTED

HOW BREAK THE CYCLE BEGAN

Break the Cycle was founded in Los Angeles, California in 1996. While there were a lot of services for children experiencing abuse by adults and for adults in peer-to-peer abusive relationships, there was a gap in services for young people experiencing abuse in dating relationships. We filled that gap by creating youth-specific violence prevention education and providing legal services for youth.

In 2004, Break the Cycle expanded nationally in response to the need for dating abuse services and programs. Break the Cycle now has staff in Los Angeles, California, Austin, Texas, and the District of Columbia, along with partners, volunteers and supporters across the nation.

ABOUT BREAK THE CYCLE

Break the Cycle inspires and supports young people 12-24 to build healthy relationships and create a culture without abuse. We are a culturally affirming organization that centers young people, caring adults, and communities in our prevention and intervention efforts. Our dynamic and diverse team believes that all young people deserve to live in a world where they can thrive.

Our Values: Everyone has a right to a safe and healthy relationship, regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual identity. We work every day to make that right a reality.

ABOUT LET'S BE REAL

Every day, young people are trying to navigate through relationships: crushes, breakups, sexuality, firsts, and hookups. All of these are a part of their lives on a daily basis. Sometimes, they don’t have the space to talk about it, learn about it, or share their realities. Let’s Be Real creates that space. We expand on Break the Cycle’s mission to create a culture without abuse by amplifying the voices of young people ages 12-24, and give them online and in-person spaces to thrive and grow. It’s not a club, it’s not a group, it’s a movement for young people, by young people, about relationships.

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LET'S BE REAL
IS A NATIONAL MOVEMENT
BY YOUNG PEOPLE
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
WHAT'S A REAL TALK?
Let’s Be Real has many activities to engage young people in action across the country. Our signature event is the Real Talk. These casual, fun sessions are hosted in communities across the country and create a space for young people to come together and discuss a variety of topics with unflinching honesty. So don’t hold back; let it out, be truthful, be real, and work together to understand how we can create a culture where everyone has healthy relationships.

WHY HOST A REAL TALK?
Creating a culture without abuse starts with conversations. Real Talks not only allow young people to share their experiences, they also open the door for education and building healthy relationship skills. By teaching healthy relationship skills specifically based on what is shared during your Real Talk, facilitators can remain youth-centered and keep the information shared relevant to their group. Talking out relationship realities builds trust among young people that attend the Real Talk and the caring adults that often facilitate them. It’s a win for everyone!

FUN FACT!
YOUNG PEOPLE PICKED THE NAME AND LOGO FOR LET’S BE REAL.
True story! In 2016, a group of 22 young people came together to decide on a name. Once Break the Cycle knew the name, we reached out to 14 more young people who focused on the aesthetics and logo - the brand of LBR as you know it. That’s how it all went down…a true youth-led movement from the start!
A good Real Talk has specific, achievable goals that are unique to your community, as well as the ones included in this guide.

- To provide a space for young people to lead conversations about the good, the bad, and normal in dating and relationships today.
- To generate holistic conversations between young people in a space that is created for them, and lead by them.
- To provide a space for young people to talk without fear of being judged or influenced by adults.
- To build on lived realities of all young people across the country, to determine best practices and engagement strategies, and to improve the overall approach of youth organizing to create a culture of healthy relationships.

What are some other goals you hope to accomplish? Use the Real Talk Goal Sheet in the Resource Appendix to write it out!
REAL TALKS ARE OPEN, HONEST CONVERSATIONS THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN CREATE A CULTURE WHERE EVERYONE HAS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
Now that you know about Break the Cycle, Let’s Be Real, and the purpose of Real Talks, let’s focus on planning it all out. We recommend that you begin planning at least three to six months in advance - the more time the better! But, scale the planning to the size and resources you have available.

**PLANNING Q’S TO CONSIDER**

*When should you have your Real Talk?*

Timing is key. Think about who you want to come and what time works best for them. After school? The weekend? Take some time to consider when the most people can attend. We recommend blocking off an hour or two for the total event.

*Where will you have the Real Talk?*

Location can make or break your event! We suggest a casual and inviting place. Nothing that feels like a clinical or classroom setting. Comfy couches, nice artwork, chairs in a circle are great things to incorporate. Check out a community space you can use. Often, they already have the technology you need and a fun atmosphere. If you want something a little more public, a park or coffee shop can create a space where there’s a lot going on, but you still have privacy to carry on a good conversation.

*Who are you inviting?*

You can’t have a Real Talk without people to talk with! Make sure you understand how many people you can fit in your space, before creating the list of invitees. Before you continue planning, get some solid confirmations. If you are in a student organization or a club, that’s a great place to start inviting people. To create an even bigger impact, consider partnering with another organization. We recommend capping the event at 30 people; too many voices can be difficult to capture in one space.
What are you going to talk about?

Your topic is important! When choosing a topic, think about what your participants may want to talk about. What kind of conversations would make them most comfortable and willing to talk? Start with a list of questions to get the conversation started, but be open to letting things flow in other directions.

Here are a few questions that have been used at previous Real Talks:

- What are qualities that you don’t like in a dating partner?
- How do you define dating abuse?
- Is it okay to be jealous?
- What are some of your boundaries? What’s the best way to set boundaries with someone?

No matter what the topic is, ask “What is your idea of a perfect relationship?” at the end. This question is great for reflecting on their previous ideas of perfect relationship and apply the healthy relationship knowledge learned in the Real Talk.

Why should people come?

Young people need a reason to attend your Real Talk. Think about what they will get out of the conversation and why it will be beneficial for them to participate. Remember, Real Talks are great for conversation and education. What would make the group comfortable? How can you make the topic relevant to them? Will there be resources available? Knowing the answers to these questions will help you in the next step: promotion!

Need some help planning? Use our Planning Sheet & Sample Timeline in the Resource Appendix as guides.
3: PROMOTE

Whether your event is big or small, consider how you will promote your Real Talk. Promotion can happen both online and offline. Consider the amount of time you’ll need to promote, who you will focus your promotion on, and if there are any outside agencies you can connect with to increase your impact. This is the time where you will be putting yourself out there, talking about your Real Talk goals and mission. Make sure to take time to create your pitch or talking points we discussed in Step One. We recommend promoting your event to the public as soon as you have the details locked in; try to aim for public promotion at least one month prior to your event.

PROMOTION Q'S TO CONSIDER

Is there a partner/group you can reach out to?

Many organizations, school groups, and faith-based groups are happy to support individual efforts. Is there a local group you want to join with? Do they have a communications or marketing team, newsletter, or media connections that can assist in getting the word out?

Are you on any community email lists or can you join one?

Consider your statewide domestic or sexual assault coalition email lists or community forums for further promotion. Get permission as needed prior to posting, but explore various cause-related community spaces that will welcome the sharing of local events.

Are you connected online?

Chances are you’re already using at least one social media platform to connect with friends or stay in the loop. Use this platform and others to promote your Real Talk. Social media doesn’t just have to be pics of your favorite foods,
cat meme, or go-to Snapchat filter, you can use it to gather friends and inspire change. Don’t forget to use the designated Real Talk event hashtag #BTCRealTalk in all your posts. If you are hosting an event in San Francisco, tag your location too.

For example: So excited for #BTCRealTalk #SF next week!

Feeling overwhelmed or not sure where to start with your promotion? Don’t worry! We have some resources to help in the Resource Appendix.

**SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**

- We’re here to be real. Swing by our #BTCRealTalk event next week!

- Ready for some #BTCRealTalk in #SF next week? Check out our event!

- Only 1 more hr til #BTCRealTalk starts at @myschool. Join us in Blueberry Lounge! #Detroit

**SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES**

- Pair text with gifs, pictures, and videos to promote.

- Use multiple platforms...but don’t overshare.

- Make sure you get a media release before posting pictures of anyone under 18 years old online.

- Share your pictures with BTC!
Facilitating cont.

- **Set the tone.** Location is just one part of setting the tone for a Real Talk. As a facilitator, it’s your duty to ensure that the group feels comfortable enough to share and feel included in the conversation. This can be done by creating group agreements. Before jumping into the questions, ask the participants what they think is important for the conversation (be respectful, one person talks at a time, etc.), write down responses, and keep them displayed for reference.

- **Be creative with how you ask questions.** Asking questions in a set order can make the Real Talk feel like a focus group or a one-sided conversation. Try number your questions and have the group choose a number. The number they pick is the question you will ask. You can also ask questions randomly by pulling questions out of a hat, using a virtual wheel, or a throwing around a question ball.

- **End the conversation on a positive note.** There is a chance that the conversation may get heavy. Make the last question, “What is your idea of a perfect relationship?” This will give participants the opportunity to reflect on something positive. In the Appendix section of this guide, you’ll find Let’s Be/Real Is...” social media cards. These are a great way to end the Real Talk (and get some great pictures)!

- **Be mindful of the participants’ needs.** If it seems like a question is too heavy, it’s okay to switch to another question. Let the group know that they can leave the circle if they need a break at any point. Having an advocate on hand to offer support is also helpful.

- **Take notes!** Chances are, the conversation will be packed full of great quotes and stories from young people. With the group’s permission, write down things that stand out and use the info to create handouts, resources, or inspire your next Real Talk.
QUICK TIPS AN AWESOME REAL TALK!

- Create a fun, engaging, safe space.
- Plan out your topics and questions ahead of time.
- Identify who in your community can support your Real Talk.
- Set the tone for a conversation that is not invasive, but informative. Leave space for topics that the group may want to address outside of your original questions.
- Share important information on how your group can continue the conversation after the event.

HOSTING Q'S TO CONSIDER

What do you need at the event?

Besides people, you should consider having some food or fun items to giveaway. Chips, cookies, juice, and water can go a long way in making the space feel casual and welcoming. If you have your event in the evening, consider providing a variety of heavy snacks to serve as dinner or even pizza or sandwiches.

What activities or materials do you need?

You'll want to take pictures of the event for social media and to share with us. Make sure you have a photo/media release for attendees under 18. A fun activity that you can do is a photo booth using our Let's Be... and Real Is... social media cards. Simply print out the cards and ask people to fill in their response. Then the person can hold up the card (they can show their face or just their hands), snap the photo, and post. Get creative with the cards too. Consider making an art project with everyone's cards to display afterward.
What are your go-to questions or topics?

You should already have your list from Step 2 on the topics or questions you want to discuss. Be sure to have those written down, in a fishbowl, or available on the screen for your group. You can control how and who will be asking the questions. Make it fun! You can expect to go through at least five questions in your Real Talk. Remember every Real Talk should include the following question: What is your idea of a perfect relationship?

What does a safe space look like to the participants?

As a host, it is your responsibility to navigate the space and the temperature in the room. We’re not just talking about the air conditioning; it’s important to measure the mood and spirit of the room too. Since you’ll be talking about sensitive topics, you want to make sure that everyone feels safe in the space, to the extent that you can. Ensure your group has agreed on some ground rules and community agreements. Before you start, it’s a good idea to ask the group to discuss what they see as good methods of communication and some that maybe aren't so good. Make a statement that stresses the importance of respecting people’s points of views, even if they differ from our own. Make it clear that questions are good, and if they have questions or need clarity on a subject, to just ask. This is especially helpful when you’re working with multiple age groups, like a space holding both middle school and college students.

Who is documenting your event?

Recall the tips in Steps 1-3, about goals, planning and promoting. You’ll want to be sure your event is well-documented. This means, you or someone on your team should serve as a “note taker” pulling quotes or comments to share on social media. You can create a collage of comments and photos online or in the space with a poster board. You'll want to designate a note taker and photographer (professional or casual) for the event so you don’t have to worry about juggling all of the responsibility.
5: REFLECT

MEASURING THE SUCCESS

You made it! The event is over, the conversations were great, and now you have tons of information to share. Evaluating your event helps you improve your next Real Talk! You can do an informal evaluation with your support team and other planners, measure the response from the audience or have every person who attended completely a quick evaluation. Find it in the Resource Appendix.

Every host should capture the following items to share with Break the Cycle:

- Date of your event
- Location of your event
- How many people attended (include age range and gender identity if possible)
- Topics covered
- Organizations in attendance (if applicable)

Send these details to letsbereal@breakthecycle.org within 2 weeks of your event so we can highlight and share the great work you’ve done. Find the summary form in the Resource Appendix.

POST-EVENT PROMOTION

Now that you have photos, info and tweets from your Real Talk, follow these best practices to make the most of the great work you did.

- Send video clips and pictures to your local news station with a press release.
- Thank participants with a group photo or shout-out on your social media.
- Turn interesting quotes into typography posts.
- Download your Snapchat story and post it on YouTube.
- Share your experience of the event on Instagram.
- Send your event summary to Break the Cycle to be featured nationwide.

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POST-EVENT PROMOTION CONT.

Share your success with us online.

- Tag us on Twitter (@breakthecycledv), Instagram (@breakthecycle), Snapchat (breakthecycledv) or post on our Facebook page(@letsberealbtc)
- Submit your photos and quotes to be included in our social media posts to letsbereal@breakthecycle.org

TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENT?

If you have any learnings from your Real Talk that you want to share with the Break the Cycle team, send us an email to letsbereal@breakthecycle.org. We would love to hear your thoughts.

NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?

Contact Us: letsbereal@breakthecycle.org
REAL TALK GOALS

Now that your Real Talk is planned, it’s time to think about what you hope to accomplish. When creating goals it’s important to consider the goals of everyone involved.

AS THE ORGANIZER I WILL:

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________

THE YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDING WILL:

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________

I WILL USE THE KNOWLEDGE I RECEIVED FROM THE REAL TALK TO:

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________
# PLANNING SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VENUE</td>
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<td>PARTNERS/ AUDIENCE</td>
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<td>PROMOTION &amp; MARKETING PLAN</td>
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<td>AGENDA</td>
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<td>MATERIALS NEEDED</td>
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<td>QUESTIONS/ COMMENTS</td>
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REAL TALK TIMELINE

Planning a successful Real Talk takes time. It isn’t an overnight process and can take 3-6 months to organize. Every event is different, but give yourself enough time to plan a great event!

3+ months before the event:
Decide to do a Real Talk
Become familiar with Break the Cycle and Let’s Be Real
Research possible partners (if applicable)
Secure partners (if applicable)
Identify possible dates
Research locations

2-3 months before the event:
Create a budget
Secure date/location/time
Create press release and social media plan
Choose a topic

1-2 months before the event:
Send out press release
Promote event on social media and via email
Create an agenda/run of show
Create questions

3 weeks before the event:
Complete Real Talk Goal Sheet
Build momentum on social media
Research food options

2 weeks before the event:
Finalize agenda
Finalize questions

1 week before event:
Send out media releases to participants (if applicable)
Heavy social media promotion

Day before the event:
Print out surveys, social media cards, and other resources
Purchase food and drinks
Do trial run of the event and finalize set-up

Day of the event:
Takes lots of pictures!
Complete participant and facilitator surveys
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Your Club/School/etc.] **Hosts Relationship Real Talk for Young People**

[city], [state] [date to be released] – One in three young people in high school experiences physical or sexual dating violence or both from a dating partner. But what if you could change that statistic all with a conversation? Let's Be Real believes that it is possible when young people take the lead!

The Let's Be Real movement, which is by young people for young people about healthy relationships, will come to the [your town] community with an activity called Real Talk. Real Talks provide young people a space to engage in truthful, uncensored conversation on dating, relationship norms, social media, current events, and friends. Real Talk sessions are made possible by Break the Cycle, a national non-profit that inspires and supports 12-24 year-olds to create healthy relationships and a culture without abuse. “This group will be a safe space to discuss relationships, connect with other young people, and provide adult allies with authentic opinions from young people,” says Jasmine Uribe, Leadership & Engagement Manager at Break the Cycle. [“Or write your own quote of why this event is important,” says You, Host of the Event.]

The Real Talk will take place in [city, state] at the [venue name & address] on [date] from [time]. [Include other details about your event like parking information, whether there will be food or prizes, etc.]

Other young people interested in hosting their own session should email letsbereal@breakthecycle.org for more information

**About [Your Club/School/etc. or Let's Be Real]**
[Name, Title, Contact Information of Host or Media Contact]

###
SAMPLE FLYER

Use for inspiration or make your own!
Be sure to include: the location and address, a contact number or email, time, date, a brief description of what a Real Talk is, and any bonuses (like free food) that are available at your event.


Join us on December 5, 2017 from 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm in Murphy Hall for a Real Talk!

We're chatting about the realities of modern dating and how we can still have healthy relationships in a world ruled by dating apps.

SNACKS WILL BE PROVIDED

RSVP to letsbereal@breakthecycle.org by November 12 to reserve your spot.
SOCIAL MEDIA CARDS

let's be...

real is...

Break the Cycle
Because Everyone Deserves a Healthy Relationship

LBR
let's be real
EVENT CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to make sure you have all logistics in place to host a successful Real Talk.

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Date & Time
- Location
- Targeted Partners (As needed)
- Food
- Questions for Session
- Agenda
- List of RSVP’d Participants

DURING THE EVENT

- Sign-In Sheet
- Surveys
- Media Releases
- Social Media Cards
- Let’s Be/Real Is quote sheets

AFTER THE EVENT

- Social media recap
- Debrief meeting
- Send Break the Cycle your Real Talk summary

NOTES

__________________________________

__________________________________

__________________________________

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__________________________________
# SIGN-IN SHEET

Date: _____________________

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<th>NAME</th>
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# EVENT EVALUATION

**Age:** _______

**Gender Identity:**
- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Trans_____

**Race/Ethnicity:**
- Black/African Descent
- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American/Alaskan Native
- Multicultural
- Other: _______________

**PLEASE CHOOSE ONE FOR EACH ANSWER.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the Real Talk Session...</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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**What did you like about today?**

**What would you change?**
EVENT SUMMARY

Date of your event: ___________________  Hosted by: ___________________

Location: ________________________________________________

Attendance: (Total # of people) ______________

Ages 12 - 18: _________   Ages 18 - 24:___________

Adults:_____________   Organizations (names):______________________________

Topics Covered:
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Event Successes & Things to Improve:
__________________________________________________________________________
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Please complete and return this sheet to Break the Cycle via email
letsbereal@breakthecycle.org