



CONVERSATION STARTERS: Promoting Family Communication

by Tom Lickona

How can we increase meaningful and enjoyable conversation with family and friends? The art of conversation is largely the art of asking good questions—ones that draw out others' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The following conversation starters can be used in one-on-one interactions between parents and kids, spouses, and friends or as group topics at mealtime or any other gathering.

1. What was the best part of your day?
2. What was the hardest part of today? How did you deal with it?
3. What's the good news and the bad news from today?
4. What are you grateful for today?
5. What happened today that you didn't expect?
6. What's something you learned today?
7. What was an interesting conversation you had today?
8. What's something you accomplished today?
9. How did you help someone today, or how did someone help you?
10. What is something someone in the family did recently that you appreciated?
11. Who has a problem that the rest of the family might be able to help with?
12. What's a book you're reading now or have read during the past year?
13. What are two things other people can do to make you happy?
14. What's something you're looking forward to?
15. If you could be granted three wishes, what would they be?
16. How can someone help you get out of a bad mood?
17. What is the most courageous thing you've ever done?
18. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
19. How do you know if someone is the right person for you to marry?
20. What does "being in love" mean to you?
21. What does "success" mean to you?
22. Who is someone that you admire? Why?
23. If you had \$100 to give to a charity, who would you give it to?
24. If you could have dinner with anyone from history, who would it be? Why?
25. What's one mistake you regret? What do you wish you had done differently?
26. Where would you most like to go on vacation?
27. What's a way you've changed in the past year (or two years)?
28. What is one of the hard things about being your age?
29. If your house was on fire, what is one thing you would try to pick up on the way out?
30. How did you get started (with a hobby, a sport, raising a family, your career or mission in life . . .)?
31. Share a happy or funny childhood memory.
32. *Dear Abby*: Read a letter to an advice columnist, but don't read the answer until everyone has had a chance to say the advice they'd give. Sample letter: "Dear Abby, I'm 15, I'm pregnant, and I'm scared to death to tell my parents. What should I do?"
33. *New Year's*: What are two goals you have for the year?
34. *Looking back*: What were two highlights of the past year (this summer, this winter)?
35. *Bouncing question*: One person asks another a question (such as any of the ones on this list), then that person asks someone else a different question, and so on, until everybody has been asked one. (If you don't wish to answer the question, request another.)
36. *One-word topics*: Choose any topic (school, sports, TV, movies, friends, heroes, clothes, God, prayer, decisions, music, politics, etc.). Anyone (in any order) can say any thing about the topic that comes to mind.

Other Conversation Resources

Journal in a Jar: <http://www.everydaycheapskate.com/marys-perspective/give-the-legacy-of-a-life-history/>

Family Dinner Project: <http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/conversation/>

Beauty and Bedlam: <http://beautyandbedlam.com/conversation-starter-questions/>