

Family Conversations Starter Guidebook

Family Guide | All Grade Levels

Introduction

Welcome! The school that your child/youth attends has chosen to use CWKTV as a resource supporting social emotional learning, mental health and equity initiatives. In addition to providing high-quality, evidence-based film and curricula for educators, we also provide resources for families and adult mentors. CWKTV is an educational media and technology company that connects students with real-life stories featuring other students like them. CWKTV owns the nation's largest non-fiction video library on social emotional learning (SEL) and parent engagement. This library features hundreds of children and youth who share their stories on film with you and your child. Because children and youth see and hear the stories of others who are like them telling their stories we are able to create videos and lessons that are highly engaging and promote constructive family conversations. Because your school or school district uses CWKTV, parents/caregivers/mentors have access to activities that you can use at home to support social emotional learning that is occurring in your child's/youth's classroom.

When Lessons Are Used At School

Every school and district approaches the work differently. Some schools use CWKTV as their sole SEL curriculum, others use our resources as a high-quality supplement to their teaching and learning efforts. A teacher or support professional uses a CWKTV lesson module to teach an important SEL or equity-focused skill or skill set. Lesson modules include an interactive, content-rich lesson plan, discussion questions and other activities. Most include highly engaging video content featuring real children or adolescents telling real stories (not actors using pre-written scripts).

What You Can Do At Home

Some schools also determine that their parents and caregivers can help reinforce concepts at home and share CWKTV through 2 main avenues:

- Utilizing the SHARE a LESSON email option on each lesson page that gives families access to the entire classroom/home activity resources for 7 days
- Providing the Family Conversation Starter PDF to parents/caregivers/mentors for immediate use and/or use over time

The key is flexibility to fit the specific needs of the school community.

Our newest resource, the Family Conversation Starters are designed to apply learning to your household situation. These activities are not designed to be a formal lesson like a teacher might use (as busy families have homework, projects, and other activities happening at home!) but are instead a way for parents/caregivers/mentors to help children and youth apply what is learned in school within the home or community *or* to serve as stand alone learning resources on important skills and concepts. These starters support critical conversations to help families have informal, but meaningful discussions about meaningful topics around the dinner table, at bedtime, in the car or any place where discussions take place.

Who Can Use the Extension Activities?

Any trusted adult can use these resources. Even though we use the term *family* we understand that there are many different family structures. Some families are multi-generational, some extended families include people who are not related by birth, others are led by single parents, while others are led by foster parents. No matter your family structure, any trusted adult can help youth by using these activities. That is why you will often see references to *parents* and *mentors*. Many of our Family Conversation Starters may also be used for group discussions with several youths and several adults. Whatever and however these activities are used, parents and mentor adults make a difference in the lives of children and youth and these activities help their efforts.

Additional Resources

Families may also wish to explore some topics further. We have included additional helpful INTERNET resources at the end of this guide. Please note that these resources are primarily for parents/caregivers/mentors, some content of these resources may not be appropriate for children.

Elementary Level Activities

At the elementary level there are different sets of activities for students in Pre-K through 2nd grade and for grades 3-5. Classroom lessons and home activities have been created based on differing developmental needs of each grade band. Topics are adjusted to be age and grade band appropriate, but it may be necessary to adjust some discussions based on your child's individual needs.

Elementary level activities all include the following:

Background

An introduction to the lesson used in school providing context and classroom lesson information.

Getting Ready for the Conversation

An explanation of the topic, video and other information that is helpful to know before having a conversation or practice at home activity. CWKTV includes classroom lessons to use with each video and lesson module, but some teachers and some schools may have developed their own lessons. Even if this happens, discussion questions and practice activities can still be used at home.

Conversation Starters and Practice at Home

Family extension activities can be either "Practice at Home" activities or "Conversation Starters" (and sometimes both). Home practice means that the activity is a chance to continue practicing the lesson conducted at school. Conversation starters are designed to allow families to have constructive discussions about the topics of the recommended school activity. In most cases there will be one or two questions that directly relate to classroom instruction and other conversation starters that help parents/caregivers/mentors apply content to the home and community, regardless if a lesson was taught in school.

Middle School Level Activities

Middle school level activities have been designed based on the developmental needs of middle school aged students in grades 6-8. Some lessons deal with mature topics that middle school students are exposed to including violence, suicide awareness, bullying, and sexual issues.

Middle school level activities all include the following:

Background

An introduction to the lesson used in school providing context and classroom lesson information.

Getting Ready for the Conversation

An explanation of the topic, video and other information that is helpful to know before having a conversation or practice at home activity. CWKTV includes classroom lessons that teachers may use, but some teachers and schools may have developed their own lessons. Even if this happens, discussion questions and practice activities can still be used at home.

Conversation Starters and Practice at Home

Most middle school family extension activities are “Conversation Starters”, but a few are “Practice at Home” activities. Conversation starters are worded as questions allowing families to have constructive discussions about the school activity. In most cases there will be one or two questions that directly relate to classroom instruction and other conversation starters that help parents/caregivers/mentors apply content to the home and community, regardless if a lesson was taught in school. Home practice means that the activity is a chance to continue practicing the lesson conducted at school.

High School Level Activities

Because of the differing developmental needs of high school aged students, lessons and family activities often deal with mature and sometimes difficult topics.

High school level activities are formatted differently from elementary and middle activities in that these activities are exclusively designed to encourage deep, constructive conversations. Each activity includes the following:

Background

An introduction to the lesson used in school providing context and information about class instruction.

Getting Ready for the Conversation

An explanation of the topic, video and other information that is helpful to know before having a conversation or practice at home activity. CWKTV includes classroom lessons that teachers can use with each video and lesson module, but some teachers and some schools may have developed their own lessons. Even if this happens, Constructive Conversation Starter discussion questions are still useful at home. Most activities also include additional information and links to useful resources helping make conversations more meaningful.

Constructive Conversation Starters

High school activities provide for deep constructive conversations and are worded in question form. In most cases there will be one or two questions that directly relate to classroom instruction and several other conversation starters so parents/caregivers/mentors can apply content to the home and community. Many Constructive Conversation Starters should be used for ongoing conversations because high school aged youth are in a time of rapid intellectual growth. It is normal for adolescents to often change their minds based on new learning and understanding, so we encourage parents/caregivers/mentors to revisit constructive conversations and discuss the same topics more than once. Also, some conversations may lead to long term discussions and even research that will require a new future discussion.

Additional Recommended Resources

Below are some useful internet resources that parents/caregivers/mentors of children and adolescents may find useful. This is not an exhaustive list but these web resources are a good starting point for caring adults to learn more about topics and issues that affect children and youth.

[CWKTV](#)

[CWK Network](#)

The homepage for the production company creating CWKTV.

[Defining US](#)

The documentary film series produced by the CWK Network focused on the role education plays in improving issues of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, poverty and homelessness, physical difference and more. In addition to information about the full-length film (and future films), many resources are available including blogs and podcasts featuring students and experts.

[Health, Safety, and Parenting](#)

[Healthy Children](#)

The American Academy of Pediatrics curates this website which provides resources about health and safety for all stages from birth to young adulthood. Most articles are written by pediatricians. El sitio web esta disponible en Espanol.

[Kids Health](#)

The Nemours Foundation curates this website with resources focused on children's health for all stages from birth through adolescence. Articles are written by various experts. El sitio web esta disponible en Espanol.

[Safe Kids Worldwide](#)

Safe Kids provides information about many safety issues such as car seats, sports safety, Halloween safety, water safety and many other topics. Topics appropriate for young children through adolescence. Recursos disponibles en Espanol.

[American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Family Resources](#)

A collection of resources for deeper information about child mental health. Topics include development from birth to young adulthood.

[Center for Youth Wellness](#)

Learning to understand how toxic stress for children and adolescents affects health for a lifetime.

[Grief and Loss](#)

[The Dougy Center](#)

The Dougy Center grief resources and toolkit provides grief and grief-related resources for children and youth including resources for dealing with terminal illness of a loved one and trauma from mass shootings. Pages translate in many languages.

[Bullying and Violence \(including domestic and intimate partner violence\)](#)

[National Bullying Prevention Center](#)

An extensive collection of resources about bullying prevention and intervention. Topics include support for all age groups. Recursos disponibles en Español.

[Stop Bullying](#)

US government website providing bullying prevention programs, information and support. Translation available in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

[Love Is Respect](#)

Information and resources for all types of dating violence, healthy relationships and sexual abuse and exploitation. El sitio web esta disponible en Español.

[Rachel's Challenge](#)

Organization that provides useful information on violence prevention in schools.

[Suicide Prevention](#)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Organization that provides resources for warning signs and intervention action for all age groups.

Multiple Topics

[Common Sense Media](#)

Nonprofit organization that provides useful information on media issues for children and youth. The experts rate various media including, TV, films and apps among others to provide useful information for parents and mentors. El sitio web esta disponible en Espanol.

[Greater Good Magazine](#)

Publication of the Greater Good Science Center providing useful insight on a variety of topics affecting children and youth wellness and success.

[Youth.gov](#)

The US government website for information on topics facing youth from all federal agencies that support youth programs.