

TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT HUNGER

At United Way, we fight to ensure that individuals and families have safe housing, sufficient food, quality childcare, and earn enough to support themselves. As part of that work, we provide emergency assistance with food, heat, and housing.

The holiday season can be a great opportunity to speak with your children about how hunger and poverty affect other kids and families in our community. We recognize that these complex issues can be very difficult to talk about, so offer the following suggestions on how to frame an effective and positive conversation:

- 1. Be Open and Honest:** Make experiences relevant and tangible to help your kids relate to others experiencing hardship. Be aware of current events, identify teachable moments, correct inappropriate terminology, and share your perspective and real life experiences.
- 2. Model Empathy:** Your kids learn their behaviors and attitudes from you. Showing that there is no shame associated with being hungry or needing help will encourage them to be empathetic. Offer reassurance that there are services to help those in need and encourage them to learn more about what resources exist (ex. United Way's 2-1-1 Hotline).
- 3. Make a Plan:** Empower your kids to take action and recognize their ability to make a difference and serve as community leaders. Work together to organize a fundraiser to sponsor families or a food drive to fill grocery bags. Volunteer as a family by visiting Volunteer HQ (unitedwaymassbay.org/volunteer) - we have opportunities for kids of all ages.
- 4: Share Your Experiences:** Continue the conversation to reinforce lessons learned, address misconceptions, and foster a desire to give back and the need to be a part of a healthy community. Encourage your kids to share their experience at school - making a difference inspires self-confidence, tolerance, and empathy.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What are you most grateful for? How do we show gratitude?
- What does it feel like when you're hungry? What do you think would happen if you weren't able to eat breakfast/lunch? How would that make you feel at school or sports?
- How much does a typical Thanksgiving dinner cost? Visit the grocery store or our Amazon Pantry (unitedwaymassbay.org/TGPfooddrive) to compare different foods.
- In the U.S., one in five children (approx. 16 million) live without consistent access to adequate food. What does that mean to you? How many people are in our family, in your classroom, or on your soccer team?
- What are ways we can help families and children who might be facing these issues?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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