



A GUIDE TO FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS

It's a value many parents share: raising children to be generous and community-minded. While you know your children best, this Family Guide contains some ideas that we have enjoyed trying with our own children. They are aimed at helping children grow in compassion and generosity.

You may, as a family, want to get more involved with United Way in relation to the theme of tonight's review. There are lots of ways that families can get involved in ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn and ready to succeed in life. For example, hosting a book drive (especially for books in other languages) or collecting diapers for United Way's Community Baby Shower. You can also search for existing ways to volunteer through Volunteer HQ at unitedwaymassbay.org/volunteer-in-boston/family/

Another way to introduce your family to other areas of United Way's work is by attending our Leadership Family Volunteer Nights, which are hosted throughout the year for donors giving \$1,000 and above annually. Contact info@supportunitedway.org for more information.

PHILANTHROPY

With a network of nonprofit partners, United Way is tackling big challenges in the area of education. If your family wants to join us in making a difference in this area, we would love to talk to you about how to focus a philanthropic gift on supporting the quality and sustainability of early education for the most vulnerable children in our region.



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United Way of
Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley



Age: Pre-K to Kindergarten

Growth Goal: Children observe their parents' behavior and practice helping others

Conversation Starters

1. Have a toast at dinnertime. Everyone raises their cups to toast someone or something they appreciated that day.
2. Involve children in picking-out friends' birthday gifts and encourage them to draw on the birthday cards or thank you cards, explaining why you are sending them. Ask: "Is there any other way you would like to say thank you?"
3. You can find a simple guide for fostering the social and emotional development of young children here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/talk-read-and-sing-together-every-day>

Activities and Games

Young children learn by observing their parents. Take children along with you when you do simple activities that are appropriate for them to observe. For example:

1. When you purchase groceries, invite your young children to help select foods they like to eat to donate to a food pantry.
2. Speak with your local Council on Aging to identify a facility nearby that would welcome a delivery of children's artwork or hand-made cards your child creates.

Age: Elementary School

Growth Goal: Children realize that bad things can happen to people and discover they have the power to help others

Conversation Starters

Dinner-time is a great time for conversation. During your next meal time, try a prompt from [The Family Dinner Project](#):

1. What is one thing you could do for a close friend that would make him or her happy?
2. Did you help someone today? Did someone help you today? If so, how?
3. At this point in life, do you believe life is or isn't fair? What made you feel this way?

Activities and Games

1. Families tell and retell the same stories—we call them family lore. Tell and help your children retell stories about times you were helped, not just how you have helped others. Empower children to see themselves as active contributors in their community.
2. Have children label a "savings jar," a "giving jar," and an "emergency jar" and talk about how they might like to fill and empty these jars.

Age: Middle School

Growth Goal: Youth realize that resources like money, education, and social networks are powerful. They discover these can be harnessed to provide opportunities to all people.

Conversation Starters

1. If a situation or concern came up at school, who would you go to for help? Who are the helpers?
2. What are some situations that could be happening at home that might keep your classmates from being successful in school? What can be done to help?
3. Margaret Mead is quoted as saying "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
4. At this point in life, do you believe life is or isn't fair? Is it the same for everyone?

Activities and Games

1. United Way recommends a simple budgeting game. During a family game night, give everyone a blank budget and a different supply of small candies to allocate. Have family members take turns creating their budget with different supplies of candies and find out how each person might navigate tough choices.
2. Doinggoodtogether.org has additional conversation starters and activities geared toward your family's interests.

Age: High School

Growth Goal: Youth realize that systems can function in ways that disadvantage some people more than others and discover that they can be part of creating a more just world through their vocation, by giving, or by volunteering.

Conversation Starters

1. Can you tell how much money someone has by how they look (car, house, etc.)? Can you tell what people care about by how they spend money?
2. Can you give an example of a time you spent money on a thing that made you happy? A time you spent money on a thing that made someone else happy? A time you saved for the future? What brought you the most joy?
3. At this point in life, do you believe life is or isn't fair? Is it the same for everyone?

Activities and Games

1. United Way has online games such as playspent.org. Create an incentive to the person in your family who was able to last longer.
2. Would you like to know where your family donates (if you don't already)? Would you like a hand in some decision making?



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