

PARENT CONVERSATION CARDS · GRADES 9–12

Let's Talk Respect

Everybody is that person to someone.

Cut along the lines. Keep them in the car.

One at a time. Ask, then stop talking.

2 SIDEWAYS IN

"Somebody told me there was a thing with a card in a sealed glass case. What actually happened?"

Why it works. Asking about the *trick* gets you the *point*, because they can't explain one without the other. Far better than "what did you learn."

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4 TELL ON YOURSELF

"Want to hear about a message I sent when I was angry that I wish I hadn't?"

Why it works. Teenagers match the honesty of the adult in the room and never exceed it. Going first buys you more than any question on these cards.

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1 THE CARD

"If you had to write down one person you'd protect no matter what — do you have one? You don't have to tell me who."

Why it works. This is the centerpiece of the assembly, and the *you don't have to tell me* is what makes it answerable. Most teenagers will tell you anyway.

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3 THE ONE THAT MATTERS

"Who at school would you go to if something was wrong? Give me a name."

Why it works. It isn't the answer, it's how long it takes. If they can't name anybody, that's worth a quiet email to their counselor — not because something is wrong, but because something could be and they'd have nowhere to put it.

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5 THE REAL QUESTION

"Why do you think they did that?"

Why it works. They'll say *because they're an idiot*. Ask again. The second answer is the real one, and it costs them the certainty — which is the whole of **be curious, not judgmental**.

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6 THE RULE THAT FAILS

"He said 'would you want that said to you' doesn't work on people your age, because the answer is 'I don't care.' Is he right?"

Why it works. You're inviting them to agree with the cynical answer, which means they'll actually engage instead of giving you the school answer.

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7 THE CYNICISM

"He said he could feel the whole room thinking nothing ever changes here. Was he right?"

Why it works. Most adults argue with this feeling. Robert named it instead, and it's the reason the room listened. Do the same — "say more about that" beats "that's not true."

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8 TONE

"Can you actually tell from a text whether somebody's joking? Every time?"

Why it works. They'll say yes, confidently. Then ask about a time they got it wrong. The gap between those two answers is the whole lesson about miscommunication.

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9 THE BILLBOARD

"Would you want the last thing you posted up on a billboard where everybody could see it?"

Why it works. It's his actual test, and it's short enough to use in the moment. Golden Rule 2.0: post about others as you'd want posted about *the people you care about*.

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10 THE CHOICE

"Is your attitude actually a choice? He told you it was. Do you buy that?"

Why it works. Let them argue. The honest version — which is where the classroom sessions land — is that you don't choose the feeling, you choose what you do with it.

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11 LABELS

"Is there a label people put on you at that school? Do you think you act like it?"

Why it works. This is the part of the hour aimed at them rather than at other people: *once you think you're something, you act to live up to it*. Be ready to hear something you didn't know.

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I2 WIN, OR LEARN

"Would you rather win an argument or learn something? He says you can't have both."

Why it works. They'll say both. Then ask whether they learned more from something they won or something they lost. The room said lost, every time.

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I3 TEN SECONDS

"What would you actually say if you walked up on something happening? Not what you should say."

Why it works. The distinction is everything. "Not what you should say" gives them permission to be honest, and the honest answer is usually something small and usable — *"yo, come on, let's go."*

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I4 THE HARDEST ONE

"He walked through a fight that ends with somebody on the floor with a brain bleed, and asked what the defense was. What did people think?"

Why it works. It isn't a moral argument, which is exactly why it reaches the kid who thinks the answer is to throw down. His word for it was **ego**.

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I5 THE BANANA

"Someone told me I've been opening bananas wrong my entire life. Explain."

Why it works. It's a joke, and jokes are a door. It's also the only assignment in the program where a student changes an adult's behavior — which is the point. Let them win this one.

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I6 THREE GOOD THINGS

"What are three things that went right today? They can be small."

Why it works. This is their seven-day assignment, and it works on the whole table. The brain defaults to hunting for the negative; this makes it hunt the other way.

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How to use these

Four rules, and the third one is the hard one.

1. One card. Not three.
2. Ask it in the car, on a walk, doing dishes — anywhere you're side by side instead of face to face.
3. Ask, then stop talking. Count to ten in your head.
4. If you get a shrug, drop it and try again another day. A card that fails isn't a card that's wrong.

"I'm not checking up on you. I just want to know what you think."

Never use a card as a way into a lecture. They can tell, and it costs you the next fifteen cards.