



CONVERSATION CARDS · GRADES 6–8

Let's Talk Respect

Be curious, not judgmental.

Cut along the lines. Keep them in the car.

One at a time. Ask, then stop talking.

1 THEIR PLAN

"What's in your anywhere box? The one nobody would notice you doing?"

Why it works. They wrote three boxes in class — home, school, anywhere. Asking about a plan they made themselves is a different conversation from telling them to calm down. The *anywhere* one is almost always the breathing.

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2 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 point of **be curious, not judgmental**.

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3 SIDEWAYS IN

"Has anybody had a bad week at school? What happened?"

Why it works. Asking about *somebody else* gets you several times what asking about them does — and a fair amount of the time the story turns out to be theirs anyway.

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4 THE HARDEST ONE TO SEE

"Is there a kid who never gets included? What do you think that's like?"

Why it works. Deliberate exclusion — the photo posted so the person who wasn't there sees it — is the most common form at this age and the least reported, because there's nothing to point at.

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5 THE ONE THAT MATTERS

"Who's the adult at school you'd go to if something was wrong?"

Why it works. If there isn't a quick answer, that's the most useful thing you'll learn all term — and it's one email to fix. **The goal isn't for the answer to be you.** It's for there to be an answer at all.

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6 THE VOLCANO

"Did something already go wrong today?"

Why it works. This replaces *"don't talk to me like that."* The explosion at five o'clock is usually the eighth thing of the day, and the first seven happened where you couldn't see them. **You can still deal with the tone afterward.**

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7 THE BYSTANDER

"If you saw somebody getting it — what would you actually do?"

Why it works. Most students are neither the target nor the one doing it, and nobody has given them the options. The four are on the back of this deck. **Work them out before it happens, not during.**

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8 SORTING IT

"Was that an accident, was it mean, or did it keep happening?"

Why it works. Replaces *"were you bullied?"* — which they can only answer yes or no. This gets you the facts, and it's the sort they practiced. **Not-bullying still gets a response. Just a different one.**

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9 BEFORE YOU CORRECT THEM

"Wait — you see four? How?"

Why it works. Two people on opposite sides of the same thing: one counts four, one counts three. Nobody's lying — they're standing somewhere different. Use it literally when they say something you think is wrong. **Pull on the rope and they pull back.**

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10 THE OTHER DIRECTION

"Who could you build up this week? What would you actually say?"

Why it works. Most of this is about not doing harm. This is the only card that asks for something, and it's the one they remember being asked. **Thirty seconds, remembered for years.**

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THE STORY THEY'LL REMEMBER

He walked over and stood there

Seventh grade. Backed against the lockers. A kid Robert didn't know came and stood next to him — "hey, what's going on?"

He didn't fight anybody. He didn't make a speech.

The breathing

Your brain controls your body. Your breathing controls your brain.

*In for 10 seconds. Hold for 3. Out for 12. **Five times.***

It's supposed to feel uncomfortable. That discomfort is what pulls attention out of the part of the brain that's upset.

One round does almost nothing. Five does a lot.

Do it with them — a teenager will not use a strategy they've never seen an adult use. (*Grades 4–5 learn 10–5–10. Use the one your child heard.*)

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Mean, mad, or bullying?

All three have to be true at once.

1. **Intent to harm**
2. **An imbalance of power**
3. **It repeats**

The forms that get missed: rumors · **outing** — telling something that was theirs to tell · **leaving somebody out on purpose, and making sure they know** · rating people · roasting, when the person isn't laughing.

"Not bullying" doesn't mean fine. It means a different kind of help.

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You can't see the hurt

In person you see the reaction. Online you don't.

So "*this is so funny*" keeps going — **and it stopped being funny for them fifteen minutes ago.** Does roasting go too far? In person you know — they're crying. Online, **you don't.**

The tap. Two students face each other, one with eyes closed. Robert taps the one whose eyes are *open* — and the other one feels it. **You don't have to touch somebody for them to feel it.**

When a message lands badly:

Put it down. Calm down. Then go talk to them.

Golden Rule 2.0: post about others as you'd want posted about you.

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What that kid actually did

Step in and you can stop it inside ten seconds.

- **Went and stood next to him.** No words required.
- **Asked, calmly.** "*Hey. What's going on?*"
- **Gave him a way out.** "*Cool. Come on, let's go.*"
- **Said something after.** "*Don't worry about them. If you ever need help, let me know.*"
- **And Robert told his sister.** That's what actually ended it.

If it's physical — don't step in. Get an adult, fast.

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If you're worried

Most of this is ordinary. Some of it isn't.

- **Watch for:** not wanting to go to school for weeks rather than days; stomachaches with no cause on school mornings; a friendship group that drops away unexplained; things going missing or coming home broken; a phone that's suddenly secret, or suddenly abandoned.
- **Anything that frightens you.** Trust that one — the cost of being wrong is one phone call.
- Start with the teacher and the school counselor. If it's being handled and isn't getting better, go back.
- **988** — call or text, 24/7, and it's for worried parents too.

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KEEP GOING

Watch it

The assembly, chaptered — plus the full parent guide and these cards.

Use the link and access code your school sent.

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