

Better Conversation Kit (Mini-version)

Methods for Enriching Conversation
With Family and Friends

Revised and Copyrighted 2009
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Full version of this kit containing
6 decks of conversation-starter
cards (180 total cards) plus bonus
activities and resources is available on the
conversation products page of website,
www.conversation-matters.com

Purpose of the better conversation process:

The purpose is for every player to win by contributing to a high quality conversation, both by sharing personal experiences and by supportive listening.

The Players

As few as 2 and as many as 10, ages roughly 12 to 100. Family or friends are best, but this can also be used by other groups of people, including strangers.

Materials needed:

1. A set of questions written out on 3 x 5 cards. (A list of questions is below for your use.)
2. A "talking piece" to identify the person who will be talking. This can be any simple object like a ball or a stick.
3. A timing device such an inexpensive 3-minute egg timer. (Or a watch.) When the sand runs out, another person takes a turn.

Create a Supportive Environment

1. A living or dining room or sitting around a kitchen table, all of these can work well. Players should be close enough so it's easy to see and hear everyone.
2. Sitting in a circle is helpful.
3. Eliminate distractions. TV, radio, and cellphones off. No multi-tasking allowed. The time is set aside for full attention.
4. Time frame. Allow at least one hour, up to two hours.

Simple Agreements for Better Conversation

1. Listen respectfully to all who share.
2. No interruptions except guidance from host
3. Speak from your experience and your heart
4. Suspend your judgments.
5. Speak briefly. Don't ramble on.

After everyone has read these simple agreements about courtesy, ask for a show of hands. If anyone is not willing to keep these agreements, they should not participate.

Let the Process Begin

1. Select an adult host who will review the basic agreements and then invite any person to start by picking up the talking piece and a card with a conversation-starter question.
2. Anyone alert person can serve as time-keeper.
3. After a card is used once, it should be set aside for the rest of this particular session.
4. If a player speaks very briefly, the host can ask "Can you say more?" If the player goes beyond their time, the host can say "Please finish up. Your time is over."

Exceptions:

1. If a player takes a card that doesn't seem appropriate to them, they can put it back in the deck and take a different card.
2. No one is forced to participate. Best to go "popcorn style" so that people request a turn when they feel ready. Allow some "wait-time" if necessary between turns.

Also, anyone can take a pass if they wish to. Sometimes people are shy and don't share until they have seen that it's safe and fun to do so.

Ending the Process

1. About 10 minutes before the end of the agreed-upon time, the host should say "We have about 10 minutes remaining." If the group agrees, the time can be extended for another period.
2. The last portion of time can be used either for drawing more question cards, or for commenting on what they've heard and learned. "Now I understand why you think education is so important, Mom."

Questions to Choose from and Print Neatly on 3 x 5 Cards

If you had to write one note and leave it on your kitchen table for future generations to read, what would you say in that note?

What was your first car? How old were you when you got it?

Can you give a visual tour of a home you grew up in?

What was your first job outside of any work at home?

What were your favorite movies as a kid? Favorite movie stars?

Where did your family live when you were born?

What was the most memorable vacation your family ever took?

What is your favorite family holiday? Why?

What was the best gift you ever received for Christmas or birthday?

Who was/is your best friend when growing up? What was it that made them best?

Who was the best teacher you ever had? Why?

What pets did you have, or want to have, as a child?

What was your favorite subject in school? Why?

What is your earliest memory as a little kid?

Who were your neighbors? What were they like?

What person – dead or alive – was your favorite hero when you were a kid? What did you most admire about this person?

What was your favorite book or comic book when you were a kid?

Who was one of your closest friends when you were growing up?
What was the most valuable knowledge you learned in school?

I hope you enjoy the process! --Loren Ekroth