

Using Conversation to Connect With Kids

The YMCA Adventure Guide program, offered in about one quarter of Ys across the country, is designed to strengthen the bond between a parent and child. One way to nurture these healthy relationships is in the rituals, routines and guiding questions parents and children share with one another and again in small groups with other parent-child pairs.

During meetings the navigator or an assigned leader introduces topics, or what we in the Y call “Leader Lines.” These same topics provide great conversational opportunities for any parent and child while driving in the car, waiting for an appointment, over the dinner table or during those quiet moments before children drift off to sleep.

Leader Lines should strike a balance between “talking at” and “talking with.” Leader Lines are best when they encourage us to ponder and consider important issues of life. They do not necessarily “answer the question” and, in fact, can be very powerful by not answering the question but instead letting each parent and child wrestle with a thought and come to their own answer.

HERE ARE SOME LEADER LINES THAT TIE INTO THE SEVEN AIMS OF THE YMCA ADVENTURE GUIDES PROGRAM

To Be Clean in Body and Pure in Heart

- Did you ever notice how young trees bend so easily? They sway clear over to the ground. This is so they won't break when strong winds blow or when animals step on them. They don't get stiff until they are old enough to stand against the wind. How do you change as you grow older?
- Did you know that ants carry over 100 times their own weight? They need this strength to build their homes. If we had the same strength, we could carry over seven tons. Do we need this kind of strength?
- Have you ever thought about all that is involved in taking a bath? Where does the water come from? What makes it hot? Where does the soap come from? What else does it take? Who made all these things? Who paid for them? Where did the money come from? What would happen if you didn't use soap? What do you think about all that?

To Be Friends Forever With My Dad/Mom/Son/Daughter

- Think about one of your best friends. What is it about them that makes you consider them a friend? Are they fun? Do they like to play the same games you do? Are they there when you need them—to play, to help out at school, to share something exciting or troubling to you? Did you ever think of your mom or dad as being a friend of yours? Can they do or be for you what your friends are?
- Friends come and go. What would be one of the good things about being friends with your mom or dad?

To Love the Sacred Circle of My Family

- Flowers are good examples of families. They are alike, yet different. How are your family members similar to each other? How are they different from each other? Are all members of your family beautiful like flowers? Can something good be said about each of them?
- What traditions do your family share each year? What things do you do together to help you feel connected?

Continued on next page

To Listen While Others Speak

- If you take the time to listen quietly in the forest, you will hear that all animals have a presence and a place in the forest. Why do you think the noises from the animals in the forest are important? Why should the other animals listen? How does this relate to your life? What purpose do you think you have? How can you help yourself by listening to your parents? By listening to your friends? By listening to others?
- Did you ever notice that we have two ears and one mouth? Why do you think we were designed that way?

To Love My Neighbor As Myself

- Have you ever seen a rainbow appear after a storm? Do you always get along with your family? Do you always get along with your friends? Is everything always happy between you and your neighbors? How might you always look and wait for the rainbow?

To Respect the Traditions and Beliefs of All People

- Did you know that one of the slowest animals in the forest is the porcupine? He doesn't have good eyes or claws, either. But he is protected from all of his enemies by his quills. Why? How does being different from other animals affect the porcupine?
- Isn't it wonderful how a butterfly comes from an ugly old caterpillar? Why do you suppose it is so ugly when it is young? Why do they have this special trick?
- Did you ever get a birthday present from someone and to be honest you didn't really like the present? How do you think your friend or family member selected that particular present for you? Maybe they really liked it themselves and thought you would too. Why might this not be the best way to select a present? What might you do instead? Do you think it is better to ask and listen and observe instead of making assumptions or thinking we know what others like, how they feel, or what they want from us?

To Seek and Preserve the Beauty of Our Creator's Work in Forest, Field, and Stream

- Did you know that one of the most powerful things in the world is silent? Ice can stop great rivers from running without any noise at all. What other big power is so quiet?
- Why is it that the rattlesnake makes a loud noise to warn us if we get too close? Who is watching out for us anyway?