Content courteous of Associated Foods Stores 2007.

PARENTS EMPOWERED.org

Conversation Jar

Encourage family talk with this fun activity.

Creating a conversation with children is an effective way to prevent underage drinking. The following activity can be used during family meals to start conversations with children. It's simple. First, print off this sheet from the computer on letter size paper. Cut out the color coded "conversation starter" messages found below. Place these small slips of paper in an old mayonnaise jar in the center of the family dinner table. During the family meal, ask the children to draw slips of paper from the jar. Help the children to enjoy the activity with full family participation in answering the questions. Family dinner will start to become a place of communication for children and their parents.

*Decorating the mayonnaise jar with colored paper and ribbons can be an excellent way to get the children involved in family activities.

- ✔ 1 Jar with lid (mayonnaise, canning, jelly, etc.)
- ✔ Cloth
- ✔ Cotton Balls
- ✔ Ribbon or Raffia
- ✔ Glue
- ✔ Decorative paper
- ✔ Scissors
- ✔ Markers
- ✔ Tape

Conversation Starters	Sharing Feelings, Dreams and Ideas	Questions Kids Can Ask Parents	Questions Parents Can Ask Kids
If you could invite three famous people (present or past) to dinner, who would they be and why?	What was the hardest choice you ever made?	What was your first job? Did you like it?	If you could have any animal as a pet, what would it be?
If you could have anything for dinner in the world, what would you have?	What do you like best about life?	What belief gives you strength?	If you were allowed to stop doing one chore around the house, what would it be?
What is your favorite place in the whole wide world and why?	Tell us about your favorite memory.	Did you have any pets growing up? If yes, what kind of animals were they, and what were their names?	If you could pick a new first name, what would it be?
If you could be on any television show, what would it be?	Tell us one thing that is really important to you.	What was one thing you did when you were a kid that made you the happiest?	What was the very best thing that happened to you today?
What is the best present you've ever received from someone?	Tell us one thing that is nice about yourself.	What was the one thing your parents made you do that you couldn't stand?	If you could add one item to your bedroom, what would it be?
What is the one thing you think they should invent to make your life easier or more enjoyable?	Tell us about something that makes you laugh.	What was one thing you did when you were a kid that made your parents proud of you?	If you had to leave the earth on a space ship and take 4 friends with you, who would you take?
If you were allowed to go anywhere for your next vacation, where would you go and what would you do?	Tell us whom you admire most and why.	What kind of food did you hate as a kid but love now?	What are some of the things you want to do in life that you probably couldn't do as well if you got into drugs and alcohol?
If you had to live somewhere else in the world, where would you live and why?	Tell us one way you want to improve your life.	Do you remember your first bike? How old were you when you got it? Tell us all about the bike.	If you could invite any famous American to spend the weekend with us, who would it be?
If you could have any job in the whole world, what job would it be and why do you think you would love it and do well?	What holds you back from doing what you really want to do?	Did you take family vacations when you were a kid? Where did you go? How did you get there?	If you knew there was no chance to fail, what job would you choose?
If you had three wishes, what would they be?	What is one thing you could do to help our family?	Who was your best friend growing up? Tell us one of your favorite stories about things you did together.	If you could be any animal, what animal would you be?
What would you do if you were President?	Tell us what things make you feel loved.	What was your least favorite subject in school? What was your favorite?	Who is your best friend and why?
If you won a million dollars, what would you do with it?	(Fill in the blank) When I feel sad, I need….	When you were my age, what did you want to be when you grew up?	What could you do to make the world a better place?

10 TIPS for Creating Happy Family Dinners

Don't let this mission feel daunting! Even the simplest meals – like store-bought pizza and salad, or grilled cheese sandwiches, carrot sticks and fruit – qualify as family dinners. The goal is to get everyone to the dinner table to spend quality time together to talk and create a feeling of love and belonging. Here are tips for pulling it off:

1. Together, set a family goal to eat dinner together, and schedule the time where everyone can be together. Three times a week perhaps? Build from there.
2. Make healthy menus for a week at a time, and shop once a week using grocery store specials. Make double batches of some items and freeze for later use.
3. Keep it simple. Family meals don't have to be elaborate. Work salads, fruits and vegetables into meals. Focus on familiar favorites, like chili or frittatas.
4. Be prepared. Keep ingredients for quick, healthful meals on hand, including plenty of fruits and vegetables. (Also stock the kitchen with fruits, vegetables, nuts, and low-fat cheese – healthy stuff the kids can snack on after school.)
5. Get the family involved. Let kids help pick the menus, prepare the food, set the table, position the chairs, serve the meal, and help clean up. Visit as you work.
6. Use the crock pot. Put everything together before leaving for work in the morning. You'll come home to the delicious smell of a cooked meal.
7. Pick up take-out, order pizza, or eat out. It still counts as quality time spent as you visit together. (Keep serving sizes under control, either at home or eating out.)
8. Make dinner time fun and enjoyable. Don't allow put-downs or power-struggles. Compliment those who helped. Leave disciplining and stressful discussions for another time. Family meals are for nourishment, comfort, and support.
9. Encourage friendly conversation. Ask each family member to share what they did or learned that day. For variety, create a family "Dinner Conversation Jar" filled with questions written on slips of paper that you each can pull out and answer.
10. Avoid distractions and interruptions. No TV allowed, no phones answered! This is time for listening to each other, sharing the day's stories, and nurturing family connection.

PARENTS EMPOWERED

Content courteous of Associated Foods Stores 2007.