

Conversation Guide: Mental Health & Our Youth

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 topics. Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate.*

I. Introductions: Why We're Here (~5 minutes)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name and what drew you to the conversation.

II. Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives. Tengan curiosidad y escuchen con la intención de comprender.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgment aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

III. Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- How often do you think about your own mental health or the mental health of others?
- What are your hopes for and concerns about the mental health of young people in the Estes Valley?
- What does mental health mean to you? How would you describe your relationship with mental health?

Round Two: Exploring the Topic – Mental Health & Our Youth (~35 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

[Report](#) after [report](#) describes a mental health crisis facing youth in the U.S. According to one [study](#), hospitalizations for pediatric suicidal behavior increased by 163% over an 11-year period. Locally, based on

the [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey](#) taken by 406 Estes Park School District students in the fall of 2021, 42.7% of high school students and 32% of middle school students reported feeling sad or hopeless for 2+ weeks in a row. 25.8% of high school students and 25.3% of middle school students reported that they considered suicide in the past 12 months. In this conversation, which will include both young people and adults, we'll reflect on youth mental health in our community. How are we thinking about mental health? What mental health challenges are our youth facing? How are young people caring for their mental health, and what helps or gets in the way? How are mental health challenges impacting our community, and what changes would we make to help our young people thrive? Whether you're a teen, or a parent, or you work for an organization that supports youth, or you're just concerned about this issue, join us to hear others' perspectives and share your own.

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- What experiences in your life, your work or your family inform your understanding of mental health? In what way, if any, do religion, culture or parts of your identity influence how you think about mental health and mental health interventions?
- How do you care for your mental wellbeing and emotional health (or that of the young people in your life)? What is working? What is challenging? What roles do you see for adults and/or the community in helping young people care for their mental health?
- Are there times or circumstances when tending to your mental health (or the mental health of the young people around you) feels easier or more difficult? What contributes to that?
- How do the mental challenges faced by youth impact the community? What changes have you seen in this over time?
- What do you want to change about mental health for youth in our community? If you could wave a magic wand and make one change to help our young people thrive, what would you do?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~10 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min)

- Give us feedback! Use bit.ly/49MX69h or the QR code →
- Join us for more conversations! We host conversations throughout the year on a variety of topics. Learn more at estes.org/community-conversations.
- Find out more about the Living Room Conversations (LRC) national model:
 - Visit the LRC website at livingroomconversations.org
 - Provide feedback to LRC at livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/
 - Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/
 - Donate! Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/



Thank you!