



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**PROJECT
CORNERSTONE**
A YMCA of Silicon Valley Initiative

Reflection Questions from *Conversation on the Go* (By Mary Alice Ackerman)

This list of questions gives us a chance to connect to the hearts and minds of young people. And we need to connect! According to Project Cornerstone's survey data of Santa Clara County high school students, only 30% find parents approachable and available to talk.

Conversations with youth are better when adults intentionally practice the art of listening. Through careful listening, adults show youth that we care about their thoughts, their feelings- that we care about them. Take care not to tell them, judge them or correct them. Simply listen.

Support: *I mean something to the people in my world.*

- Name a relative of yours that you admire. What makes this person admirable?
- What was the nicest compliment you ever received from an adult?
- Tell about your favorite teacher.
- What is the most important quality you look for in a friend?
- What two questions do you have about your family history?
- How well do the students in your school get along?
- What does the word respect mean to peers at your school? To the teachers at your school?

Empowerment: *I make a difference in the world.*

- Name something you have always wished you could do. How could you make it happen?
- If you had to commit a year after high school to performing a service for your country, what would you do?
- Talk about a time when an adult treated you as an equal.
- How could school be different if kids made and enforced the rules?
- How easy is it to talk about serious issues with your friends?
- What's the biggest way someone has made a positive difference in your life?
- Complete this sentence: One way I'd like to change the world is...
- What are the best places to hang out in your community? If you could create the perfect hangout, what would you include?
- What are the worst problems in the world today that you wish you could do something about?
- What would you like other family members to teach you?

Boundaries and Expectations: *I know what's expected of me and what behaviors are "in bounds" and "out of bounds."*

- How do you feel when someone pushes you to do your best?
- What special qualities should a role model have?
- Do you have friends whose family rules are *too* strict? Why do you consider them too strict? Do you have friends whose family rules should be more strict? Why?
- What are three things about you that your friends would say make you a good friend?
- Talk about a time when you really succeeded at something and surprised yourself.
- Have you ever had a friend you later realized was a "bad influence" on you? How did you handle it?
- Do some family rules actually help you say no when friends ask you to do something that you don't want to do?

- If you could describe your ideal day, what would it be like?
- Which friend makes you feel best about yourself? How does he or she do that?
- Which teacher, coach, or other school worker is a positive role model for you? What qualities do you value in her or him?
- What is your highest expectation for yourself?
- What is your biggest dream? What is the first step you can take toward achieving it?
- Do you think you are a role model for anyone? Why or why not?
- What's the best story you've ever heard about someone overcoming an obstacle?

Constructive Use of Time: *I have balance in my life between activities that challenge me and activities that refresh me.*

- If someone told you that you could start a new club at school, what would it be?
- How does being on a team – sports, clubs - help you when you become an adult?
- Who is your favorite musician? What do you like about her or his music?
- If you could go to the Olympic games on any team, what sport would you choose? Why?
- What is your favorite family time together?
- If you could be a professional artist, which would you be: a painter, dancer, singer, actor, sculptor, craftsperson, or writer? Why?
- What activities do you do to make the world a better place?
- Are you sometimes afraid to try new things because you think you won't be good at them?
- If you could take lessons in anything, what would you want to learn?
- What is the best thing television has done for the world? What is the worst thing?
- How do the activities you do teach you more about yourself? What have you learned?

Commitment to Learning: *I like to learn new things.*

- What do you say if someone asks how you're doing in school? How do you know if you're doing well?
- What was your favorite book when you were young? What did you like about it?
- Would you rather be in a class that deals with a subject you love but whose teacher is boring, or would you rather be in class you aren't excited about that has a passionate teacher? Have these situations happened to you?
- Of all your classes this term, which one will help you most in the real world?
- What is a subject or topic that isn't taught in your school, that you would like to learn?
- Do your friends work really hard to do well in school, or just "get by"? How does their attitude affect how well you do in school?
- What's the way that you learn best? Do you like to see something, read about it, do it, hear it, or practice it? How can you find out more about your learning style?
- What makes a teacher a good teacher?
- If your friends asked you to name three books they should read, which ones would you recommend? Why would you recommend them?
- What's your first memory of school?

Positive Values: *I try my best to "do the right thing", and I believe it is important to help others.*

- Was there ever a time when you had to stand up for something you believed even when your friends weren't behind you 100 percent? What was it, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Do you think adults give youth enough responsibility? In what areas could young people take more responsibility in their communities? Can youth be given too much responsibility?
- How hard or easy is it for you to admit when you are wrong? Has this changed over time?
- Who do you choose to talk with when you need to make tough decisions about which way to live your life? Who has been there for you?

- What are the benefits of being responsible?
- Complete the sentence: I think it's important to take the time to help others because...
- Talk about the last time someone encouraged you.
- Have you ever been hurt by racism or sexism? What happened and how did it affect you?
- Are there any people it's hard for you to accept and respect? What about them makes them difficult to accept and respect?
- Which sense is the most important: sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste? Why?
- What is your favorite motto to live by? What are some of your favorite quotations?
- What is the biggest problem facing your generation?
- Which three social issues most concern you?

Social Competencies: *I know how to make good choices and build positive relationships.*

- Which has more impact: giving money to charities or giving time to charities?
- At your school, what does it mean to be "popular"? What are the good and bad parts of being popular?
- Where does hate come from? Is it possible to overcome it?
- What are the five top qualities of a good friend?
- People say that writing down a goal is a powerful step toward making it happen. Do you think that is true? What goals would you write down?
- Who was your first friend?
- Have you ever had to defend one of your beliefs to your friends? What was it about? How did it feel to defend yourself?
- What is one thing about your cultural heritage that you are really proud of?
- Why does planning matter, when so many things happen unexpectedly? Does planning sometimes get in the way of having fun?
- What are the top three pressures facing you now?
- Are you comfortable around people who are different from you? Why or why not?

Positive Identity: *I feel good about myself. I have a bright future.*

- What are you most proud of?
- What does it take to be a leader? Do you think you are a leader? Who do you think is a good leader?
- When people first meet you, what do you think they see? What do you wish they would see in you?
- What is your most treasured possession? Why is it so valuable to you?
- What are five words people would use to describe you? What words would you use?
- You can ask any four people to dinner to have great conversation. Who would you ask?
- What makes you proud of your family members?
- What stresses you out the most? How do you deal with it?
- If you could be any animal, what would you be? Why?
- What is the trait you most like about each member of your family?
- If you could achieve only one great thing in your life, what would it be?
- What's the one thing that worries you the most about your future?
- What actions are you taking now to make the world better in the future?