

Fostering Connection and Communication Discussion Questions

Use open-ended questions to engage students about how they are feeling, with the goal of acknowledging their concerns while reframing the discussion.

1) Ask a check-in question, such as:

- **How are you feeling today? or How's today going so far?** For younger students you may ask them to show you. Use Fist-Five hand signals (The range is Five finger up=Feeling Great down to Fist=Feeling Bad).
- **Acknowledge how students are feeling by paraphrasing what they said and normalizing those feelings.** ("It sounds like you are feeling a little bored and lonely today. That's normal when you aren't in a routine and don't get to see your friends.")
- **Be sure to share how you are feeling/doing. Share strategies to address those feelings.** ("I was feeling that way yesterday. Today I feel a little better because I talked to my friend on the phone last night.")
- **Encourage them to ask questions of one another.** Remember that you do not have to have all of the answers. Your role is to guide the conversation and be sure that every student is heard. (Simply saying, "I hear you", can be powerful.)

2) Provide a specific focus for the discussion. Be the guide on the side; rather than sharing your own opinion, listen and acknowledge students' comments. Be ready to redirect as needed if the discussion goes off topic or goes in a negative direction.

- **Gratitude/Kindness:**
 - Think about a time when someone did something nice for you. Why do you think they did it? How did it make you feel? How do you think it made them feel?
 - What does gratitude mean to you? Think about something you are grateful for? How does it make you feel?
 - Think about a time you needed help and someone helped you. How did you feel? Why do you think they helped you?

- Think about someone you said Thank You to recently. Why did you say it? How did it make the other person feel?
- **Empathy:**
 - What does it mean to “walk in someone else’s shoes”? When was a time that you felt empathy?
 - Think of a time that you wish someone was empathetic to you. How did you feel?
 - Think about a time that you were empathetic to someone? How did that make them feel? How did you feel?
 - Who is someone that might need help? Could you help them? Why or why not?
 - Does social media help you understand others? Can it be a negative thing? Can it be a positive thing? How can you use social media in a positive way?

3) Provide closure to the discussion, acknowledging students’ contributions. (“I’m so glad to have heard from each of you. I learned a lot today.”)

4) Open the floor for check-ins with individuals. Be sure to follow up with anyone that didn’t respond and anyone that shared concerns. Invite students to reach out to you individually as well.