

# Week of Sharing Wisdom



## HOW TO HOLD A PARENT CHAT

Thank you for your interest in leading a Parent Chat! The Partnership for Children, Youth and Families believes that when we come together to connect, share, and support one another, we can all be the parents we aspire to be.

We want your Chat to be easy, enjoyable, and a positive experience for everyone. Below we offer a format - with suggested talking points - for each section. Use this format, or create your own!

Chat Format:

- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **Agreements**
- **The Conversation**
- **Wrap Up**

### WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome everyone & gather them in a circle (or as close to circle as you can), introduce yourselves (Name, child's name, school, maybe even something whimsical like 'if you were a fruit...') and share opening thoughts on why the Chat is important. Here is what we think. Feel free to share your own thoughts!

Parenting is one of the most rewarding, and challenging, jobs that we have. Most of us do it without the benefit of formal training. Parenting styles and techniques vary tremendously. We are also deeply invested in the outcomes (our children). All of this makes it an important, but sometimes difficult, topic to discuss. We believe that by sharing our successes, struggles, experiences, we can learn from one another and become the parents we aspire to be.

- **Parents are not alone.** Sometimes just knowing that others are experiencing the same frustrations can be a relief.
- **Parenting is part natural, and part learned.** Much of our parenting comes from our experiences as children; but we also learn a lot along the way.
- **Parents have wisdom to share.** We all need help sometimes. And we also all have ideas, techniques, and strategies that have worked, or failed. Sharing these can help us all be better parents for our children
- **Parents can support one another.** Knowing one another makes it easier to call another parent to check in to see if they really ARE going to sleep over; or if you really ARE the ONLY parent who does X ; or to let them know what you heard/saw their son/daughter say or do.
- **Parent Chats allow the Partnership to connect with parents** throughout Arlington. With your help, these chats will give us an opportunity to hear from parents and share information and resources with them.

### MAKE AGREEMENTS

Parenting is incredibly value-laden and conversations can be tricky. So it is important to have some agreements on how to listen and share so everyone feels safe and comfortable.

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Here are a few suggestions. Spend a few minutes brainstorming ideas, or use any of the ideas on this list. It has been our experience that when groups decide together on agreements, they honor them more.

- **They are all our kids.** All of the young people in our lives, and those in our children's lives, belong to all of us and we want the best for them.
- **Seek to be open-minded.** Listen attentively and respect all points of view. By focusing on listening, we may also benefit from the variety of ideas around the table.
- **Accept other views and perspectives.** As parents we feel judged all the time about how we raise our children. So everyone in the group can feel safe, work to make this judgment-free zone
- **Be curious.** Seek to understand, rather than change minds. If someone expresses a point of view that seems different from yours, ask questions to understand better.
- **Speak from the heart.** Share from your own experiences. Use "I" statements. The group will benefit by knowing what is important to you and why, not just your opinions.
- **Keep it short.** Share honestly, but don't go on and on. Honesty is important, but so is giving everyone a turn.
- **Leave therapy to the professionals.** Parent Chats are designed to help parents share their experiences with everyday parenting. If an individual or family is struggling with deeper issues, those should be addressed elsewhere, under supervision of a professional therapist.

## HOLD THE CONVERSATION

- Use the 5 Rounds of Questions or select a topic that interests the group (see below)
- Remember to seek agreements and share solutions

## WRAP IT UP

Where do you go from here? Will you meet again? What did you learn? Any agreements? Let us (and the world) know!

- **Take a group selfie!** Post to the Partnership Fb page, your Fb page (and tag the Partnership), Tweet it to @APCYF, or send to [apcyf@arlingtonva.us](mailto:apcyf@arlingtonva.us) and we'll post it! #ArlParentChats
- **Decide if you wish to meet again.** One conversation is great; more is better - and will certainly build or strengthen your relationships. We suggest trying to meet 4 times. This allows the group to build relationships and trust, explore various topics, and also allows members to miss a session and still be part of the group.
- **Solicit feedback.** Provide us feedback on this [Parent Chat Participant Evaluation](#) to help us track how well chats are working. People are more likely to fill out a survey in the moment, rather than afterwards, so set aside 3-5 minutes and share the link so people can do it on their phones before leaving.
- **Thank everyone for participating.** It can feel risky to come and share, especially on something as personal as parenting.

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### ROUNDS OF QUESTIONS

These are suggested questions to help get conversation started, and flowing, in your Chat. Feel free to use these, add different questions, or skip some.

#### **Round One: Getting Started / Why Are We Here?**

- What interested you or drew you to this conversation?

#### **Round Two: Core Values.** Answer the main question; use prompts to help you:

- What are the hopes and dreams you have for your child(ren)?
  - o What sort of person do you want them to become?
  - o What will they be doing when they are adults?
  - o How will they live their lives?

#### **Round Three: What has been your experience with parenting?**

Answer one or more of the following questions to help guide the conversation:

- What was your upbringing like? What was your relationship with the people who raised you?
- What relationship do you want with your children? How does it differ from that which you had with your parents?
- What are you struggling with as a parent?
- If there is one thing you could pass on to your children, what is it?
- How can we support one another?
- What else would you like to say about parenting?

#### **Round Four: Reflection**

Answer one or more of the following questions:

- In one sentence, share what was most meaningful or valuable to you in this Chat.
- What learning or new understanding did you find around parenting?

#### **Round Five: Accomplishment and Next Steps**

Answer both of the following questions:

- What is an action or next step that you would like to take based upon the conversation?
- How can you support one another?

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### POSSIBLE TOPICS

What is your group interested in talking about? Feel free to use this list or come up with your own.

We find that a little structure is helpful for the conversation. Start by opening the topic for discussion; take turns sharing successes, concerns and, issues; discuss strategies and solutions.

- Parent/child communication
  - Getting them to listen to us
  - Getting us to listen to them
- Use of devices/electronics (screen time)
- Social media/phone/texting
- Alcohol/drug use/opioids
- Following directions (or not following)
- Rules / Discipline / Consequences
- Temper tantrums/moods
- Developmental stages (what to expect at their age)
- Managing HW and studies
- Housework, chores, and contributing at home
- Allowance and financial management
- Extra-curricular activities (Too much? Too little?)
- Stress
- Curfews
- Dating/relationships
- Sexuality
- Driving

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