

## TURN TO WONDER

**When a young person says or does something inappropriate, it's important that you...**

1. Try and connect with their feelings and needs.
2. Show you are sincerely interested in the young person. Don't use a "technique". Be adaptive in your approach.
3. Focus on contributing to their wellbeing. Try and see the beauty in them. When you feel triggered by a young person, find the good in them.
4. Meet them where they're at. Start with what they are feeling, what's is going on for them. Try and understand.
5. Focus on impact vs. intent when you or they offend. Intent makes it about the person's "goodness", impact focuses on how the other person was harmed.
6. Empathize don't sympathize. Rather than feel sorry for them, try to understand their behavior from their life experiences.
7. Work to not hold an enemy image of them. Don't insult or put down.
8. Ask questions with genuine curiosity to find out more.
9. Wait to educate until after asking questions so you first have a better understanding of where they are coming from.
10. Wonder about their needs. Why did they say or do what they did?
11. Don't punish, shame, blame, or guilt them into understanding. Help them to critically reflect so they internalize their understanding of the impact of their words and/or actions.
12. Move beyond a place of rightness and wrongness. Avoid a power struggle.
13. Give them some grace to make mistakes.
14. Stay with it. Even if they push you away.
15. Circle back around to check in. See how they are doing. How have they come to understand the situation that occurred?
16. Believe their perspective is their reality. Listen to understand.
17. Be opened to learning from them. You may have done something that was harmful. Try to avoid approaching it from a place of defensiveness.
18. Apologize for any wrong you've done.
19. Consider how culture may play a role in their response e.g., eye contact.
20. Be grounded in your foundational beliefs and set limits. What is non-negotiable? E.g., use of racial epithets, put downs, etc.
21. Consider if your rules, your way of thinking is
22. When deciding on a course of action ask yourself, "Whose interests are being served?"

## PATHWAYS TO CONNECTED CONVERSATIONS

Adapted in part from Stone, D., et. al. (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*.

### Explore where each story comes from

“My reactions here probably have a lot to do with my experiences in a previous . . .”

### Share the impact on you

“Whenever you throw something across the room I become concerned about your safety and the safety of others. I then have to stop teaching and everyone stops learning.”

### Take responsibility for your contribution

“There are a number of things I’ve done that have made this situation harder. . .”

### Describe feelings

“It hurts my feelings to hear you say (for example) I don’t care”

### Work together towards a solution

“What can we do differently so this doesn’t happen again?”

### Reflect on identity issues

“It’s hard for me to see that I’m not doing a very good job teaching you. I have always believed myself to be an excellent teacher and yet I realize that something I’m doing isn’t working for you.”

### Name the elephant in the room

“I’m wondering how you feel about having a White (teacher, counselor, etc) explore this issue with you. I imagine that if I was in your shoes, I would be concerned about whether or not someone like me would understand your experiences.”

### Appeal to their Principles

1. It’s not like you to say something like that. What’s going on?
2. What is causing you to say those things to \_\_\_\_\_? That’s not usually like you.
3. That’s not like you to be so hurtful. I’m guessing something must be bothering you for you to say/do. . . What’s going on?
4. What caused you to react that way? Typically, you are the one who responds respectfully.
5. I was taken aback to hear that coming from you. I have always thought of you as someone who is much more considerate of other peoples’ feelings. Help me understand why you would say that about...?
6. I think of you as someone who treats others with a lot of respect. I’m surprised to hear you say something like that to another person. What’s that about?

## LEARNING CONVERSATION STEMS

1. Shift from, "I understand," to, "Can you help me understand?"
2. I need you to help me understand where you are coming from on this.
3. What do you think would be most fair for the other person in this situation?
4. How do you see it differently?
5. Say more about why you think it's appropriate to...
6. What do you believe about how people should be treated?
7. What would it mean to you if that happened?
8. I'm wondering if it's possible to . . .?
9. I'm wondering if it would make sense if. . .?
10. How would I be showing you that I care about you if I let you. . .?
11. What do you think needs to happen to repair....?
12. If I talked to (someone important in their lives) what do you think they would say about. . .?
13. If I asked Leah's parents, how do you think they are feeling knowing you said those things about their daughter? (For someone struggling with empathy.)
14. I care a great deal about you and so I'm going to continue to expect your best from you. That's not going to change. If I didn't care or if I thought you couldn't do it, I wouldn't be talking to you about this. What do you hear me saying?
15. It's important to me that we resolve this issue but maybe I haven't been going about it in the right way. So, let's talk about what I could be doing to help you. . . and then let's talk about your role in this.
16. I'm wondering whether we could talk about how we each reacted to this situation and discuss ways we both could have handled it better? (Adult starts with what they could have done differently and then invite young person to do the same).
17. When a youth calls you a racist: You may see me as a racist and I'm willing to talk with you about it, however, I care about you and know that you can do better than what you are currently demonstrating. I believe that it would be racist of me if I allowed you to... So... we can talk about it, however, I still expect for you to e.g., rewrite this paper, follow directions. And/or: What does racist mean to you?
18. Your own best thinking:

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*"When the going gets tough turn to wonder,  
wonder what's going on with you, wonder what's going on with me."*

Parker Palmer