

## Conversation Guide: Mental Health for 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.*

### Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)

*Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.*

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

### 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.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement 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.

### 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:*

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?

## **Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Mental Health for Youth (~40 min)**

*One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.*

As youth, our daily life mainly revolves around growing our mind- be it through school or from our relationships- in preparation for adulthood. However, when 50% of all eventual mental health illnesses start at age 14 (source: NAMI), teenagers can feel that that time is actually spent struggling with their minds and the changing world around them. From the pressures of social media, being successful in school, disagreeing with loved ones around the direction of our lives or accessing mental health services, and the disruption caused by COVID-19 on schooling and interpersonal interactions-- we have a lot to deal with. While our school gym classes have stressed the importance of physical health, mental health has often been pushed to the side, leading some to feel lost navigating this new terrain. In this conversation, we invite you to step back from the pressures you may have in your life, connect with others around how mental health impacts each of you, and find strength in the thoughts you share.

*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.*

- How do religion, culture, family, or parts of your identity influence how you think about mental health and mental health interventions?
- This is the third year COVID is actively affecting schools. What has been difficult for you? What have you learned and appreciated? What has surprised you?
- What influence or impact does social media have on you? Do you use or avoid it? What do you like and/or dislike about social media?
- How do you care for or consider your mental or emotional health? What does self care look like for you and is there anything you want to change about it?
- Do you find yourself caring for or being affected by the mental and emotional health of others? What does that look like and what impact does it have on you?
- What hopes and concerns come to mind when considering your own transition to adulthood and the independence associated with it?

## **Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 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 [livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/](https://livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/) or QR code
- *Donate!* Make more of these possible; give at [livingroomconversations.org/donate/](https://livingroomconversations.org/donate/)
- *Join or host more conversations!* With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at [livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/](https://livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/)



*Thank you!*