Tips for talking About Giving

“Talking about philanthropy with children couldn’t be more important. I don’t think you can measure that kind of thing now, but you’ll be able to measure it in twenty years' time.”
– Henry Timms, executive director of the 92nd Street Y and founder of #GivingTuesday.

If you’re not familiar with #GivingTuesday, here’s the scoop: Each year, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (this year, November 28) is established as a “day of giving”—a day when we can all choose to counteract the cultural messages of Black Friday and Cyber Monday by focusing our efforts on doing good for others. Here are some tips to help you have conversations with your family about giving.

Make It Personal: Kids will come to the issue of giving with different sensitivities and sensibilities,” says Dr. Anne Fishel, a founding member of The Family Dinner Project. “With most kids, it’s important to make a very personal connection to giving and explain that everyone—kids and grownups alike—need help from others.”

Think of a close neighbor, friend or a relative who needs help in some way and what you might do as a family.

Ask Questions: One good question to ask young children is “What is something you love that you’d like to share with someone else?” Questions for older kids and adults include “What is a strength or a gift you have that you can share with others?” or “Think about a time that someone did something nice for you? What was it and how did it make you feel?”

Who Do You Appreciate: Giving isn’t just about people in need. Strike up a conversation about people your family appreciates—like a teacher, a coach, a babysitter, or the friendly mail person. Then brainstorm ways you can surprise this person with a handwritten thank you card, homemade cookies, a gift card, or something else.

Support Causes: You can do this as a family, a couple, or individually, but the goal is to do it regularly and connect it to issues that matter to you. If you give your children an allowance, ask them to divide their allowance into three jars: spending, saving and giving. Again, help connect their choice of charity with something that is meaningful to them. An alternative to this idea is to start a “give” jar into which everyone contributes money or items for charity. Actually witnessing parents giving is a powerful motivator for children of all ages.

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Talking to Kids About Tragedy

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It is usually advised to keep family dinner conversations positive, so that the table is a warm and welcoming place for all. However, sometimes there are sad, scary or upsetting events that demand our attention and connection. In those cases, you may choose to use the dinner table as a safe and supportive space for asking and answering tough questions. Events such as the recent mass shooting in Las Vegas or a tragedy in your own family can easily overtake the consciousness and become overwhelming, especially to children and teens. It’s important for families to carefully and sensitively address such occurrences and gather strength and comfort from one another. Whether you choose to discuss tragedy with your family at the dinner table or at some other time and place that feels comfortable for you, below are some ideas and resources to guide your conversation.

For Young Children (Ages 3-6)
At this age, parents may assume that children don’t know that something bad has happened. They may not say anything about it or ask questions. However, in our hyper-connected society with news always readily available, it's unlikely that even small children have completely avoided seeing or hearing something troubling. They are also likely to pick up on the emotions of adults around them and need help interpreting those feelings to feel safe. The Fred Rogers Company (https://www.fredrogers.org/parents/special-challenges/tragic-events.php) has excellent tips for parents of young children. In addition to following these guidelines, you may also ask questions such as these to help increase your child’s sense of security and belonging:

- What are some things we do together that make you feel loved?
- Who are some people in our community who help others?
- What are some things we can do to help another person?
- Do you have a special toy, book or object that helps you feel safe? Tell me a story about your special item?

For Elementary Aged Children (Ages 7-11)
Children in elementary school are likely to have heard quite a bit about tragic events, and not all of it may be true. It’s important at this age to make sure that you have an open dialogue with your child to provide honest answers and dispel any rumors that might be circulating on the playground or school bus. However, be careful to only provide as much information as you feel your child needs or can handle emotionally. Be sure you know what they’re really asking before you respond, and be alert to their cues as you answer so you can gauge whether you’re providing too much information. Kids’ coping abilities and emotional maturity can vary widely in the elementary years; you know your child best, and what one second-grader can handle may not be the same as what your second-grader can process. The American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-to-children.aspx) has many good resources that can be helpful in discussing tragic events with grade-school children. In addition, you may try asking some of these questions to help your child process events in a more positive way:

- Have you heard about any people who acted as helpers during this event? What did they do?
- Do you think it takes a special kind of person to be a helper, or can anyone step up and lend a hand in a tough situation?
- Where in the world do you feel most safe? Why do you feel safe there? Tell me about it?
- What are some things we can do that help you to feel calm and secure?
Talking About Tragedy Continued…

For Older Kids (Ages 12-17)
As kids move into adolescence, it’s likely that they’ll not only have a lot of information about tragic events, but will also actively seek more through talking to friends, searching the internet and watching television. Whenever possible, try to be available to watch with them so you can provide dialogue and feedback about the messages they’re receiving through media. In this age group, children may not be as receptive to talking about their feelings with you and may hide their thoughts and fears. The American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-children.aspx) has tips to help parents stay alert to signs of stress in teens. You may also ask more general questions to help open up a dialogue with your older child:

- What makes someone a hero? Can you think of any real-life heroes?
- What’s one world problem you’d like to see solved in your lifetime?
- Is there any cause that you feel passionate about? What could you do to further that mission?
- “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” Have you seen any examples in real life that embody this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr?

In addition to talking with your kids and helping them to process their thoughts and feelings in times of tragedy, it’s vitally important to be aware of your own feelings and take good care of yourself, physically and emotionally. The CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/features/CopingWithStress/) has a brief guide on identifying and managing your own emotional responses after a tragic event that may be helpful, and Upworthy (http://www.upworthy.com/11-small-ways-to-feel-less-helpless-this-week-from-a-trained-therapist?c=ufb1) has a list of ways to feel less helpless in the wake of tragedy, provided by a trained therapist. Remember the old air travel adage about putting on your oxygen mask before helping your child? It applies to managing difficult events as well. Also, don’t be afraid to express your own sadness and confusion to your child. Saying “I feel sad about this, too” or “I don’t know why” can be powerful statements that help kids understand that their feelings are real and safe to express.

FUN: Five Thanksgiving Questions for Families

1: The first Thanksgiving came after a year of terrible hardship. What difficult thing have you encountered this year that has made you feel thankful today?
2: The Pilgrim’s survival was partly due to the kindness of the local American Indians. What kindness have you received lately that has helped you? What’s one thing you are proud to have done for others?
3: What tradition do we have that you especially enjoy? If you could create a new tradition for our family, what would it be?
4: If you could share one thing that is important to you, what would you share and with whom?
5: How can our family keep a spirit of thankfulness and giving every day, not just on Thanksgiving?

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Recipe of the Month

Multicolored Slaw

2 cups peeled, grated golden beet (about 1 large)
2 cups grated or finely shredded red cabbage
1 cup grated carrot (about 1 medium)
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
2 green onions, finely sliced
1/2 cup plain yogurt
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 tablespoon poppy seeds

Combine the yogurt, honey, apple cider vinegar, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Whisk until thoroughly mixed.

Stir in the poppy seeds.

Add the grated beet, carrot, red cabbage, and chopped parsley and green onion.

Toss the salad well to coat the vegetables thoroughly with the dressing.

November Birthdays

Nov 4 – Melissa (Katie) Mendez
Nov 11 – Jamie Hogue
Nov 15 – Silvia Acosta
Nov 17 – Esmeralda Robles
Nov 20 – Monica Gonzalez
Nov 20 – Rosalinda Gonzalez

Happy Birthday

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November

American Diabetes Month
www.diabetes.org

Lung Cancer Awareness Month
www.lungcanceralliance.org

National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month
www.alz.org

Stomach Cancer Awareness Month
www.nostomachforcancer.org

Run/Walk Events

Two Cities Marathon
Nov 5 ~ Woodward Park
http://www.twocitiesmarathon.com

San Joaquin River Trail Run
Nov 18 ~ Milerton Lake/San Joaquin River

Fresno Turkey Trot
Nov 23 ~ Woodward Park
https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/SierraChallengeTurkeyTrot

The Super Run 5K
Dec 2 ~ Woodward Park
http://thesuperrun.com/locations/fresno-ca-superhero-5k-run/

Fresno Jingle Bell Run – Toys for Tots
Dec 9 ~ Palm and Shaw
https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/JingleBellRunforToysforTots

Resolution Run
Jan 1 ~ Woodward Park
https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/ResolutionRun1

Pirate 5k Booty Run
Jan 27 ~ Woodward Park
https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Fresno/Pirate5kBootyrun