

ASKABLE | ADULT CAMPAIGN

Be someone they
can talk to.

Lesson Plan and Conversation Starter Guide



Vermont's children and youth say they want more informed, approachable adults who they can turn to for help in navigating stress and challenges on a day-to-day basis.

Bring these activities and conversations to adults in your community. Together, we can increase understanding, build skills and make personal commitments to be more askable for the young people in our lives.



To order Askable Adult postcards and stickers, call the Vermont Network (802) 223-1302.

Find out how you can become more askable for the youth in your life and get involved in the campaign at vtnetwork.org/askableadult.

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#askableadultvt #askableadultcampaign #vtnetwork

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For electronic copies of the facilitator and participant guides with live links, go to:

vtnetwork.org/askableadult

Welcome Facilitators

Thank you for bringing the Askable Adult Campaign to adults in your community. The purpose of the guide is to offer activities and conversation ideas to help adults explore being more “askable” for the children and youth in their lives.

The Guide Design

The *Askable Adult Campaign Lesson Plan and Conversation Starter Guide* consists of two guides: one for facilitators and one for participants. Both can be found at vtnetwork.org/askableadult. The facilitator guide includes facilitator notes found along the right sidebar. The participant guide is a workbook with room for participants to write as they follow the activities. The guide outlines two options: a 2.5-hour activity-based lesson plan and a guide for informal conversations.

Your Role as Facilitator

Your role as facilitator is to guide the discussion, hold the space, and provide materials for participants. Facilitators are not expected to be experts in being “askable,” in child development or parenting, or to “have all the answers.” For more information and links to research and resources, facilitators can refer participants to vtnetwork.org/askableadult.

Your Team

Activities or conversations can be led by youth/adult teams or by one or two-person adult teams. If you’re facilitating with others, review the activities ahead of time to decide who will guide which parts.

What You’ll Need for Lessons and Conversations

- An electronic copy of this guide and an internet connection to access audio stories
- Printed copies of the participant guide for each participant
- Printed copies of handouts for each participant (separated from the guide for easier use). Handouts include:
 - » Lesson Plan Agenda
 - » Story transcripts
 - » Three wordles
 - » *Askable Adult Skill Building Toolkit*
 - » Optional Lesson Plan Evaluation
- Enough Askable Adult postcards and stickers for group. To order, call VT Network at (802) 223-1302

Lesson Plan Evaluation

The Lesson Plan Evaluation is an optional tool for facilitators to use to get feedback from participants on the effectiveness of their time together.

WHO: The people

The Participants: This lesson plan and conversation starter guide is designed for adults who are interested in becoming more “askable” and supportive for the children and youth in their lives. Participants are seeking to enhance skills that will enable them to have strong, trusting, and affirming relationships, communicate more effectively, strengthen connections, and be a valuable resource for the young people in their lives.

The Facilitators: Ideally, a youth/adult team would facilitate the lesson plan, although a one or two-person adult team can also facilitate. More informal conversations can be led by any adult or youth/adult team. When choosing your team, consider that youth/adult teams model the skills that participants are learning as well as increase the opportunity to support youth leadership and engage participants in a higher level of introspection and dialogue.

WHY: The situation that calls for a lesson plan and conversation starters

In a 2017 VT Network survey of 584 Vermont Youth, Vermont children and youth ages 10 to 24 identified an array of concerns that cause them stress in their everyday lives—including drug and alcohol use; poverty; sexism and harassment; body shaming and bullying; and homophobia and transphobia. When asked what would help, young people said that the number one solution would be having more supportive and “askable” adults in their lives.

We also know that the single most common factor for children who develop resilience to stress and adversity is having at least one stable relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult (Harvard Center for the Developing Child). This is especially critical for young people working to develop a positive sense of self in a culture that often devalues them based on their identity, ability, background or status.

Children and youth asked for more informed, approachable adults who they can turn to for help navigating stress and challenges on a day-to-day basis. In a subsequent photo campaign, youth identified wanting to talk about relationships, sexuality, struggles, and everyday things like navigating employment, and school. **When asked what they talk to their “askable adults about,” youth’s number one answer was “life.”**

The goal of the VT Network’s Askable Adult Campaign is to increase, motivate, equip, and nurture more askable and supportive adults for youth by increasing awareness and offering tools for adults to increase understanding, build skills and commit to action steps. This guide provides an opportunity for any community member to bring the Askable Adult Campaign materials to a diversity of adults in a variety of settings.

FACILITATOR’S GUIDE

WHO: Is the audience for whom this is intended.

WHY: Describes why the guide was created. All participants should be encouraged to read the “WHY.”

SO THAT: Describes the change that we want to make.

WHEN: Describes the amount of time the lesson and conversations will take.

WHERE: Describes possible environments to bring lesson plan and conversations.

WHAT: Explains the content.

WHAT FOR: Explains the learning objectives and tasks that participants will do to learn the content.

HOW: Is the Lesson Plan Agenda.

SO THAT: The change that is possible

So that youth have access to more confident, skilled, askable adults in their lives.

When: The Timing

Lesson Plan:

- 2.5 hours in total
- Can be broken into two 1.25-hour sections
- Does not include breaks

Conversation Starters: Flexible timing

Where: The Places and Spaces

Lesson Plan: Staff meetings, teacher in-service days, conference workshops, community groups

Conversation Starters: Informal gatherings of friends or family, groups of parents over food and drinks, lunchtime conversations with co-workers

Facilitator TIPS:

- All activities are voluntary. The activities in this guide will often ask people to reflect. Sometimes reflection can bring up hard feelings or memories. Provide many opportunities for participants to take individual breaks or opt out of activities.
- Times below are rough estimates. Consider having one facilitator pay attention to time.
- You may want to add in more time for breaks or suggest participants take breaks as they need to.
- When giving directions, use the lesson plan as the basis of your script.
- Try giving groups a 1-minute warning to help wind down conversations.
- When facilitating “large group” sharing sections, consider asking for a few volunteers to share if you’re low on time.

WHAT/Content (Skills, Knowledge & Attitudes)		WHAT FOR? Learning Objectives (What participants will have done by the end of the lesson plan)
Increase understanding of what makes an adult “askable”	LESSON PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflected on the voices of youth heard through stories and words.• Identified qualities that make an adult askable.
Build skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build trusting, affirming relationships• Commit to consistent connections• Commit to caring communication• Be a curious co-pilot		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explored and analyzed skill-building tools to strengthen relationships, connections, communication, and conversations with children and youth.• Practiced communication and listening skills to improve caring communication with youth.
Make personal commitments to be more askable for the youth in our lives		Chosen a youth to talk to, a relationship-building skill to work on, another skill to build, and information to learn.

HOW: The Lesson Plan

Below is the Askable Adult Campaign Lesson Plan with activities. Encourage participants to follow along, write responses in their participant guides, and consider bringing this lesson plan to other adults in their communities.

ASKABLE ADULT CAMPAIGN LESSON PLAN

I. Welcome, Share the “WHY,” Facilitator Role, Learning Objectives, and Agenda

II. What Makes an Askable Adult?

- A. **Listen** to Maru and Alexa’s story and **note** something Maru says about what makes adults askable for them. (2:30)
 - ▶ Consider **sharing** something you noticed.
- B. Individually, **look over** the handouts with three wordles. These images reflect what Vermont youth said about who their askable adults are, what their qualities are, and what they’d talk to them about.
- C. **Circle** something that surprised or inspired you on each wordle image.
- D. If you are willing, **share** at least one of your answers with the group.

III. Remembering Our Own Experiences—If You Want To *(optional)*

- A. Get out some paper and **write or think about** these prompts:
 - ▶ Did you have an askable adult when you were young?
 - ▶ Who was your askable adult?
 - ▶ What made them askable for you? What did you talk to them about?
 - ▶ If you didn’t have an askable adult, what would have been helpful for you? How else did you find support?

ASKABLE ADULT CAMPAIGN LESSON PLAN

Part I. – 10 minutes

- Welcome
- Brief intros of participants and facilitators.
- Explain role of facilitators (p. 3).
- Okay to “opt out” of activities.
- The WHY (p. 4).
- WHAT FOR learning objectives (p. 5).
- Hand out and review Agenda.

Part II. – 13 mins

A. – 3 mins.

- Hand out story transcripts to follow while listening.
- Intro stories with directions about what participants should note.
- After stories, ask volunteers to share.

B. – C. – 5 mins (total); hand out wordles.

D. – 5 mins.

Part III. – 16 mins.

- Have blank paper available.

- B. If you are willing, **share** with a partner some of your reflections.
- C. Consider **sharing** with the large group something that came up for you during this activity.

Deeper Dive: To find out more about the research supporting youth/adult connections and the Vermont Youth Survey, check out Blog #1: vtnetwork.org/askableadult

IV. Four Askable Adult Skill Areas:

- ◇ Building trusting, affirming relationships
- ◇ Commit to consistent connections
- ◇ Commit to caring communication
- ◇ Be a curious co-pilot/navigating tricky conversations



- *Remind that this is an optional activity.* Remembering experiences may bring up hard memories. Allow space for people to bow out

A. – 5 mins.

B. – 6 mins. (3 for each partner); suggest people turn to the person next to them.

C. – 5 mins.

Deeper Dive: These occur throughout the lesson plan. Point out this as the first of several offerings for additional learning.

Part IV. – 3 mins.

Take this time to introduce the *Askable Adult Skill Building Toolkit* in the handout section.

V. Building Trusting and Affirming Relationships



- A. **Listen** to Gabriel and his mom Natanya's story and **note** how trust and connection were built in their relationship. (2:15)
- Consider **sharing** something you noticed.
- B. **Read** over the *Building Trusting and Affirming Relationships* tool and **identify**:
1. Something that is doable for you to increase your askability:
 2. Something that is a "stretch" for you to achieve in order to be more askable:
- C. Consider **sharing** with the large group a tip that is doable or a stretch for you.

Deeper Dive: To find out more about *Building Trusting and Affirming Relationships*, explore Blog #2: vtnetwork.org/askableadult

Part V. – 15 mins.

A. – 3 mins.

B. – 6 mins.

C. – 6 mins.

VI. Commit to Consistent Connections



A. **Listen** as Thomas and Laurie talk about their unlikely connection and note something about “consistency.” (3:37)

► Consider **sharing** something you noticed.

B. **Read** over the *Commit to Consistent Connections* tool.

C. In teams of three or four, **identify**:

► The three connection tips you find most important.

D. Consider **sharing** your top three tips with the large group.

Deeper Dive: To find out about parents and caregivers as askable adults and more about Committing to Consistent Connections, check out Blog #3: vtnetwork.org/askableadult

Part VI. – 18 mins.

A. – 4 mins.

B. – 3 mins.

C. – 6 mins

D. – 5 mins.; ask each group to share.

-----1.25 hours----

Note: If you want to do the lesson plan in 2 sessions, break here.

VII. Commit to Caring Communication



A. **Read** this twitter quote by Jada Yuan, reporter for the *Washington Post*:

“‘Do you want to vent or do you want advice?’ Just learning now, after 40 years on earth, that this might be the most important question to ask whenever a friend or loved one is upset.”

B. Spend a few minutes free writing about this quote. Have you ever tried this approach with youth or someone else? If so, how is it helpful? If not, why do you think it might be helpful—particularly in communicating with youth?

► Consider **sharing** something you wrote.

C. **Read** over the *Commit to Caring Communication* tool.

D. With a partner that you haven’t worked with yet, **practice** the tip: *WAIT! Why Am I Talking?*

1. Select a topic about which adults typically lecture:

- Limiting social media/screen time
- Wearing seatbelts
- Cell phone use while driving
- Something else?

Part VII. – 25 mins.

A. – 2 mins. Ask someone to read the quote out loud. It is also in the *Participant’s Guide* and you could post it in the flip chart.

B. – 4 mins. After writing, ask volunteer to share.

C.– 5 mins.

- **Instructions** – 3 mins.; explain activity to participants and make sure everyone understands before starting. A good way to ask is: “What are your questions?”

- **1.& 2.** – 2 mins.

2. Decide who will be the adult and who will be the young person.
 - ▶ **Adult**, you have a short time to talk with a young person about this very important topic. You have a lot of good knowledge to share about it.
 - ▶ **Youth**, you don't really want to be lectured and you have strong opinions about this topic.
3. Take one – 3-minute conversation:
 - ▶ **A:** Tries to get a lot of info to youth about the topic.
 - ▶ **Y:** Tries to voice their opinion.
4. Take two – 3-minute conversation:
 - ▶ **Y:** Talks about the topic.
 - ▶ **A:** Only talks 1 minute total out of the 3 minutes. Use a cell phone stopwatch to time how long you talk.
5. Switch roles and do it again (if you have extra time).
6. Large group share:
 - ▶ What came up for you?
 - ▶ What was hard?
 - ▶ How did it feel for the young person?
 - ▶ How did it feel for the adult?
 - ★ What possibilities open up when we make more space for youth to be heard?

For the 3 minutes conversations (3 and 4), offer to time conversation so that everyone starts and ends together.

- **3.** – 3 mins
- **4.** – 3 mins.; ask "adults" to keep track of their own 1-minute time frame.
- **5.** – Do this part of the activity **ONLY** if you feel like you have an extra 6 minutes to spare.
- **6.** – 8 mins.; choose some or all of these questions to encourage a group dialogue.
- ★ Make sure to include the final appreciative question.

Deeper Dive: To find out about being askable with children who have experienced trauma and more about Committing to Caring Communication, explore Blog #4: vtnetwork.org/askableadult

VIII. Be a Curious Co-Pilot/Navigating Tricky Conversations



A. **Read** this quote:

"Kids talk when we give them our full, curious attention. In order to truly hear them and discern the right-sized response in the moment, we need to tune in to their channel. Like on an old-fashioned radio dial, we have to hone in on just the right spot to tune out the static of our fears, worries, and distractions so we can get the message—are they just venting? Or asking for help developing a plan? The best way to do that is to look inside and get to know the static that comes up for us. I often think the best thing we can do to show up for our kids is tend to ourselves, seeking support from friends, colleagues or professionals, especially when we have a hard time removing the static on our own."

~ Julia Chafets, LICSW, Montpelier

B. With a partner, **reflect** on these questions:

1. What are tricky topics or conversations for you to have with children and youth?
2. **Talk** about your own "static": what fears and worries make it hard for you to fully tune in to critical conversations with the young people in your life?
3. What support do you need to help clear your static? How can you get that support?

Part VIII. – 22 mins.

A. – 1 min.; ask a volunteer to read the quote out loud.

B. – 10 mins. (5 each); give participants a 1-minute warning to wrap up their conversations before moving on to C.

C. **Read** over the *Being a Curious Co-Pilot* tool.

- ▶ **Star** a skill or tip that you'd like to circle back to later.

D. **Revisit** wordle #3 or think about the youth in your life and:

- ▶ **Identify** one topic that is important to youth that you would like to learn more about.
- ▶ If you can, **identify** a resource for learning more about that topic.

E. Consider **sharing** the topic that you'd like to learn more about and ask for resource ideas if you don't know of any.

Deeper Dive: To find out about being askable with for younger children, navigating tricky conversations, and more about *Being a Curious Co-pilot*, explore Blog #5: vtnetwork.org/askableadult

IX. Explore Possibilities and Actions

A. **Listen** to Alex and Sarah's story and **think** about what is possible. (2:22)

B. Large Group Appreciative Question:

- ▶ What new possibilities are open for you to be more "askable" for the children and youth in your life? For you to have more deeply connected, trusting, affirming, relationships with them?

X. Act /Askable Adult Swag

A. Personal commitment postcards. On the back of an #askableadultvt postcard, write:

- ▶ I will ask _____ how I can be more askable for them.
- ▶ One thing I'll do to build relationships with youth:
- ▶ One skill I will work on:
- ▶ One topic I will learn more about:

C. – 4 mins.

D. – 3 mins.

E. – 4 mins.

Part IX. – 13 mins.

A. – 3 mins; introduce Alex and Sarah as the final story.

B. – 10 mins; open space for the large group question.

If people are having trouble getting started:

- Ask them to think about their own family and children; children that they work with, children who are friends.
- Consider going around and asking each person to share something.

Part X. – 10 mins.

A. – 5 mins.:

- Introduce the postcards as opportunities to make a personal commitment to being more askable.
- Give a card to each person. If the postcards are blank on the back, have them write these 4 prompts on the back, leaving room to fill them in.
- Have people silently fill in their cards.
- Suggest postcards be displayed in places where youth can see them.

Some more ways to take action:

- B. Take a selfie with your postcard and post with hashtags:
#askableadultvt #askableadultcampaign
- C. If there is a young person who identifies you as “askable,” show them your personal commitment card. See if they want to post a selfie of you together along with a statement. Tell your story of connection (use the hashtags).

Consider these as interview questions:

- ▶ Adult to youth: What makes me askable? How do you describe our relationship? What do you think adults need to know about being more askable and supportive for youth?
 - ▶ Youth to Adult: What do you see as the benefits of being in meaningful relationships with youth? Are there any challenges you face? What would you tell other adults who want to be more “askable” for the youth in their lives?
- D. Put an Askable Adult sticker on your water bottle and a postcard in your space to show youth that you are askable.
 - E. Bring this *Askable Adult Campaign Lesson Plan and Conversation Starter Guide* to other adults in your community. To order postcards and stickers, call: (802) 223-1302
 - F. Share Askable Adult Campaign blogs, posts, and materials.
 - G. Sign up for the Askable Adult Campaign email list to stay connected.
 - H. Find more Askable Adult resources and find out how you can get more involved in the campaign at:
vtnetwork.org/askableadult
 - I. Follow the VT Network on Facebook and Instagram.

Deeper Dive: To find out about finding support for yourself and taking action, check out Blog #6: **vtnetwork.org/askableadult**

B. – I. – 5 mins.; go around and ask members of the group to read one item from this list of ways that adults can take action and become more involved.

To order Askable Adult postcards and stickers, call VT Network: (802) 223-1302

XI. – 5 mins. (optional)
Ask for completed evaluation forms.

-----2.5 hours----

XI. Evaluation (see handout)

HOW: Conversation Starters

Below are conversation prompts (stories, tools, quotes) along with discussion questions to stimulate informal conversations about askable adults. Participants can follow along and consider bringing these conversations to other adults in your communities.

ASKABLE ADULT CAMPAIGN CONVERSATION STARTERS

I. Welcome, Share the “WHY,” Facilitator Role, Handouts

II. What Makes an Adult Askable and Remembering Our Own Experiences

A. Conversation prompts to consider:

- ▶ **Listen** to Maru and Alexa’s story and **note** something Maru says about what makes adults askable for them. (2:30)
- ▶ **Find** and **look over** the handout with three wordles.

B. Discussion questions to consider:

- ▶ Talk about the story. What did you notice?
- ▶ Who are askable adults for youth?
- ▶ What qualities do askable adults have?
- ▶ What do youth want to talk about? What else have you heard?
- ▶ Did you have an askable adult when you were young? Who was your askable adult? What made them askable for you? What did you talk to them about?
- ▶ If you didn’t have an askable adult, what would have been helpful for you? How else did you find support?

III. Building Trusting, Affirming Relationships

A. Conversation prompts to consider:

- ▶ **Look over** the *Building Trusting and Affirming Relationships* tool in the *Askable Adult Skill Building Toolkit*.

ASKABLE ADULT CAMPAIGN CONVERSATION STARTERS

Part I.

As part of your welcome, explain the ‘WHY’ (p. 4), and the facilitator role (p. 3).

Explore the guide with the group pointing out the conversation starter section, hand out story transcripts to follow while listening, wordles, and toolkit.

Part II.

A. If you listen to stories, introduce them with directions about what people should note when listening and follow up with first discussion question.

TIPS:

When considering discussion questions, ask the group which ones they’d like to talk about.

- ▶ **Listen** to Gabriel and his mom Natanya's story and **note** how trust and connection were built in their relationship. (2:15)

B. Discussion questions to consider:

- ▶ Talk about their story. What did you notice?
- ▶ Pick a tip that is doable for you and talk about it.
- ▶ Pick a tip that is a stretch and talk about why.
- ▶ What does this bring up for you?
- ▶ Talk about youth that you have or are building relationships with. What has been easy? What has been hard?

IV. Commit to Consistent Connections

A. Conversation prompts to consider:

- ▶ **Listen** as Thomas and Laurie talk about their unlikely connection and **note** something about "consistency." (3:37)
- ▶ **Read over** the *Commit to Consistent Connections* tool.

B. Discussion questions to consider:

- ▶ Talk about the story. What did you notice?
- ▶ Talk about a time that you felt connected to a young person and used one of these tools in that process.
- ▶ Talk about a time that you struggled to connect with a young person and what tool might have been helpful.
- ▶ What are the three most important connection tips on this tool?
- ▶ What complicates having consistent connections for you as parents/caregivers, teachers, family members, friends? Barriers?
- ▶ What does this bring up for you?
- ▶ Talk about something you discovered by exploring this tool.

TIPS:

If you choose questions that ask about personal experiences, be sure that the whole group is comfortable with them. Remembering experiences may bring up hard memories. Make sure to allow space for people to bow out.

Refer to *Deeper Dive* sections in the lesson plan for links to blogs with resources for:

- Research about youth/adult connections;
- The VT Network Youth Survey;
- Parents and caregivers as askable adults;
- When children experience trauma;
- Being askable for younger children;
- Navigating tricky conversations;
- And more on skill building tools.

V. Commit to Caring Communication

A. Conversation prompts to consider:

- ▶ **Read** this twitter quote by Jada Yuan, reporter for the *Washington Post*:

“Do you want to vent or do you want advice?” Just learning now, after 40 years on earth, that this might be the most important question to ask whenever a friend or loved one is upset.”

- ▶ **Read** over the *Commit to Caring Communication* tool.

B. Discussion questions to consider:

- ▶ Talk about the quote. Have you ever tried this approach with youth or someone else? If so, how is it helpful? If not, why do you think it might be helpful—particularly in communicating with youth?
- ▶ Pick a tip that is doable for you and talk about it.
- ▶ Pick a tip that is a stretch and talk about why.
- ▶ What does this bring up for you?
- ▶ Consider roleplaying the *WAIT! Why Am I Talking?* tip with tricky topics where one person is the adult and one is the child or youth.
- ▶ What complicates caring communication for you as parents/caregivers, teachers, family members, friends?

VI. Be a Curious Co-Pilot/Navigating Tricky Conversations

A. Conversation prompts to consider:

- ▶ **Listen** to Connor and Hannah talk about a crucial moment in their relationship and **note** something that Hannah did to support Connor. (3:14)
- ▶ **Read** the quote on page 12 of the *Facilitator Guide*.
- ▶ **Read over** the *Being a Curious Co-Pilot* tool.
- ▶ **Explore** wordle #3

Part VI.

A.

- You can choose to do some or all of these prompts to open conversation.
- Find the quote in a box on page 12 of the facilitator guide. Ask if someone could read it out loud or all read silently.

B. Discussion questions to consider:

- ▶ Talk about the story. What did you notice?
- ▶ From the quote, talk about your own “static”: what fears and worries make it hard for you to fully tune in to critical conversations with the young people in your life? What support do you need to help clear your static? How can you get that support?
- ▶ From the tool, what is doable for you? What is a stretch?
- ▶ From the wordle or issues coming up for children and youth in your life, identify one topic that you would like to learn more about.
- ▶ Talk about resources to learn more about the topics you identified.

VII. Explore Possibilities and Actions *(always include this question)*

A. Conversation prompt to consider:

- ▶ **Listen** to Alex and Sarah’s story and **think about** what is possible. (2:22)

B. After having some of the conversations above, **ask**:

- ▶ What new possibilities are open for you to be more “askable” for the children and youth in your life? For you to have more deeply connected, trusting, affirming, relationships with them?

C. Make a personal commitment by filling writing on the back of an #askableadultvt postcard:

- ▶ I will ask _____ how I can be more askable for them.
- ▶ One thing I’ll do to build relationships with youth:
- ▶ One skill I will work on:
- ▶ One topic I will learn more about:

D. Check out #10 B. on page 14 for more ways to take action and become involved.

Part VII.

B. Include this question in every conversation.

C.

- Introduce the postcards as opportunities to make a personal commitment to being more askable.
- Give a card to each person. If the postcards are blank on the back, have them write these 4 prompts on the back, leaving room to fill them in.
- Have people silently fill in their cards.
- Suggest postcards be displayed in places where youth can see them.

D.

- Look together at the list of ways that adults can take action and become more involved on page 13 of the lesson plan.
- Encourage supporting one another in making commitments to be more engaged.

HANDOUTS

Askable Adult Lesson Plan Agenda

- Welcome
- What makes an askable adult?
- Remembering our own experiences
- Four askable adult skills to build
- Building trusting, affirming relationships
- Commit to consistent connections
- Commit to caring communication
- Be a curious co-pilot/navigating tricky conversations
- Explore possibilities and actions
- Act/Askable Adult Swag
- Evaluation

Story Transcripts

MARU AND ALEXA

Hi, I'm Alexa. Hi, I'm Maru.

Alexa: So, what would you tell other adults? What do they need to know about how to help you feel comfortable?

Maru: That maybe listen to the people who are talking to them. And just like being understanding and ask questions. Because, I know that, for myself, when people ask questions to me it helps me understand like where they're at. Because, like, sometimes adults will just like say 'umhum' when they don't actually understand you. And then you keep going and then they can't follow you. So just like asking questions is important. When you were growing up, were there any askable adults in your community that you felt you could turn to?

Alexa: That's a good question. I don't know that I really feel like, when I was 9 years old, I had as many people that I could trust as you can. I think, as I got older, there were like some of my counselors at summer camp and then um...I don't know. I think that it makes me feel like I want to cry a little bit. Part of what I really love about the way that your parents have chosen to raise you is that I think you really understand your feelings a lot. And it's easy for you to be able to name what you're feeling and like talk about it and even just like know that you're feeling really frustrated with your brother and like be able to ask for help and all that. I think it's really an incredible gift and it's part of why I like spending time with you because you like DO know how to talk about your feelings. And I think it's such an important skill to have because knowing how we're feeling actually helps us like have healthy ways of dealing with that as opposed to ways of dealing with our feelings that might hurt other folks or hurt ourselves. It just feels really important to me. Whew!!

I think I feel glad to be a person like that in your life and glad that you, special being who I love, feels like you have a lot of support from folks really see and love you. And everybody deserves that!

Maru: Yeah!

GABRIEL AND NATANYA

Gabriel: I'm Gabriel.

Natanya: And I'm Natanya, and I am Gabriel's mom.

Natanya: Can you talk about a time when you felt like I was there for you?

Gabriel: I was at a friend's house. It was the first time I had a sleepover there. We were having a great time until we had to, like, mellow down and go to sleep. The sleeping arrangement was just much different than what I was used to. I really wasn't feeling comfortable and so I went upstairs and contacted you.

Natanya: So, it was pretty late at night when you called me?

Gabriel: It was like two in the morning, it was really late. You didn't really ask me any questions and you came over and picked me up without any judgment.

Natanya: So, is there something that I've said to you over time at any point that made you feel like you knew that you could call me at that time and asked me to pick you up?

I think I feel glad to be a person like that in your life and glad that you, special being who I love, feels like you have a lot of support from folks really see and love you. And everybody deserves that!

Gabriel: There would never be any judgment if I ever needed really anything from you that you could do. You would come do it, especially like that. I feel like you've proved it over time and that was one of the reasons that I called you and it just try and go through it.

Natanya: How, then, would you describe our relationship?

Gabriel: I feel like there is a strong like bond almost where we trust each other a lot but there's sometimes when it's a bit shaky and we can get angry at each other. And we just ... but every time we ... we get the relationship back and we can trust each other a lot more.

Natanya: And do you feel like it's gotten better over time?

Gabriel: I feel like over time ... it was a bit shaky and now it's a good ... it's getting stronger, yeah!

Natanya: Awesome, I'm glad to hear that. Love you.

Gabriel: Yeah, love you too!

THOMAS AND LAURIE

Laurie: My name is Laurie. Thomas comes to our house and he works with the horses and he walks our dog, Sky. There was something very different about him. We just kind of started talking to each other. Yeah, just randomly we would be doing something around the house, or the horses or Thomas would be working with the horses, and we would just start talking to each other and I, at least, felt that it was just this kind of instant connection.

Watching him with the horses has been incredible, incredible, they watch for him. My dog, who is this really quirky character, adores Thomas. And they have a connection, too. Sky just thinks ... he's like, you're one of them. He's like ... "Here comes my buddy!" They walk at the same pace.

Thomas: He's my best friend. I prefer animals over people too!

Laurie: You can see that with him with the horses. They so accept him, and they trust him which is very unusual. They are not trusting by nature.

If there was something that was really troubling you, would you feel comfortable coming to me and asking me if we could talk about it?

Thomas: Yeah.

Laurie: Why do you think? I mean ...

Thomas: I don't know, I just feel really comfortable talking to you. You know, it's like a safe space.

Laurie: I feel that way about you, too. It's sort of like I think that what's really essential in our friendship is that there is no judgment. And, I think that one of the things that we connected with is we both like working with wood. So, when Thomas fell out of the sky, I was doing some projects on outbuildings. When he came to work with the horses, he would check in to see what I was doing and he always had these suggestions that totally blew me away. Because I think ... ah ... I know what I'm doing! And then one time I had smashed my finger with a hammer because the nail wouldn't go in the wall and he said, "You know, if you a drill pilot hole first, that won't happen." I find myself ... I'm learning stuff from him too and he's got ... he has a really creative mind and he comes up with these ideas that are like, really?

Thomas: I don't hear many good compliments about myself. It's nice to hear some good.

Laurie: Do you believe it?

Thomas: I do.

Laurie: I hope you do because I mean it. I really do. I think you are incredibly special. It was like he just came into my life unexpectedly and I feel that he's helped me broaden the way I look at things and it's been a real joy to watch him growing and changing. Do you feel you've changed since you started coming to the little farm?

Thomas: I have, I have a lot. I can control my anger better.

Laurie: Yeah, I've noticed that about you. And you smile a lot more.

Thomas: Yup!

Laurie: Yeah!

CONNOR AND HANNAH (included in conversation starters)

Hannah: My name's Hannah.

Connor: My name's Connor.

Hannah: I'm Connor's cousin and legal guardian.

Connor: Yes!

Hannah: Connor, how would you describe our relationship?

Connor: It's really weird and, like, pretty complicated.

Hannah: What went into our relationship changing so drastically?

Connor: I think a lot of that was like really tough conversations and some like shared experiences over the course of the time I've been living with you. I feel like opening up to you like the first few times really like helped define our relationship by some new terms and that were more about like me talking to you about difficult topics and you listening. You listened in a way that made me feel comfortable continuing the conversation. And I feel like that's a lot of what helped define our relationship later on. Kind of like having all those difficult conversations and being able to build our relationship up from them and like bond through them and learn about each other through them. So like, for example, when I would come to you about my mental health and how I really felt like I needed help, you didn't react like some other people had before and like treat me different or like share a lot of difficult information about your own mental health without prompting—which people had before in those kind of roles in my life. You listened and I talked about it with you and then you helped me to find solutions to solve the problem and you are very quick in response time. When I was transitioning between antidepressants, I was feeling really horrible and I told you and you called my psychiatrist and we got the problem solved. That took a very short amount of time in between when I told you.

So it really felt like you took me seriously and you really like valued how I felt and validated how I felt and then came to me with like serious solutions instead of kind of brushing aside how I felt or being like "Oh well, the people prescribing you this medication or this dosage of medication know what they're talking about so there's no way you could be feeling this way so just deal with it, it will get better." It was more like, "Well this obviously isn't working for you so let's find a solution" and I found that that was really valuable and I need to look at you in a more like someone I could talk to you about those kind of things and I could come to you if I had problems.

ALEX AND SARAH

Sarah: I'm Sarah.

Alex: I'm Alex and Sarah is my teacher.

Sarah: So, what do you think adults need to know about being more askable and supportive to youth?

Alex: I think knowing that our brains are not fully developed. It sometimes feels like you're all alone, and like it's just like you and the other people in your high school and like kind of no one else, especially in Vermont. Having adults there who say like "Hey, I know what you're doing, I know what you're going through, like, I know how you feel." And, having people who've like gotten through it and who are like adults now say like, "You know, it's ok, it goes on and it happens to all of us." It seems like something kind of silly because like obviously all teenagers grow into adults, but it is nice to know sometimes. I had a question for you. And that would be like what would you tell other adults that want to be more askable?

Sarah: One thing that's really important that I think about every day is how ... that I do not know ... there's so much in this life I just do not know. And, so like being humble and not being ... pretending that, just because I'm a teacher or an adult. that I have all the answers, I don't. And as a matter of fact, I learn every day from students—new things. So, the irony is that you teach me, you know? And I've learned a lot from you personally and all the things that you've done in school. And being open to that and like really just realizing this is like a give and take. We're learning from each other, we're going through this life and being in the same space every day, and you know, it's a connection. So, I just would encourage like adults to keep that in mind: be humble and realize we don't have all the answers, but we can be good listeners and help when we can.



ASKABLE | ADULT CAMPAIGN



Words from Vermont Youth

These three images reflect the words of Vermont youth voiced through a photo campaign that followed a 2017 Youth Survey. This is what youth said about who their askable adults were, what their qualities were, and what they'd talk to them about.

VT YOUTH SAID THEIR ASKABLE ADULT IS:



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ASKABLE ADULT
CAMPAIGN



VT YOUTH DESCRIBE THEIR ASKABLE ADULT AS:

keep it between us know well willing to help
has experience knows stuff **non-judgmental**
good listener **loyal** approachable
not a snitch understand believe feel ok **confidential**
funny open minded count on not mean
reverent good person keep secrets **fun**
light hearted understands **caring**
listen closely considerate friendly able to give advice
helpful truthful **trustworthy** eye contact
I know trustable serious listenable
respects privacy **trust** trusts me know you
help solve problems doesn't ask questions **listens**
comfortable asking **supportive** relaxed
good **honest** trust you **nice** educated
kind sharing a problem **respectful**
cares doesn't press you
understanding not gonna bust you

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**ASKABLE ADULT
CAMPAIGN**



YOUTH SAY THEY'D TALK TO AN ASKABLE ADULT ABOUT:

relationships family problems
legal issues
something wrong at home very big issues
sex health what actually happens
friend problems drugs harrasment
real first love questions topics with no judgment how I'm feeling
emotions money problems choices everything
problems at school personal problems
problems sexuality mad boy problems tea sad anything
sports transgender
whatever life personal things
nothing school when I'm in trouble
bullying dogs gender dysphoria fighting don't know
problems outside of school small issues
sex/healthy something wrong with me
abuse hitting being divorced
life skills things I'm uncomfortable with
depression college advice alcohol
struggles car advice

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ASKABLE ADULT
CAMPAIGN



Lesson Plan Evaluation

Please mark each objective if it was achieved and how useful it proved to be to your learning:

Askable Adult Lesson Plan Objectives	Achieved? Yes, No, or Unsure	How Useful for You? 1=Low, 5=High	Comments
Reflected on the voices of youth heard through stories and words.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	
Identified qualities that make an adult askable.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	
Explored and analyzed skill building tools to strengthen relationships, connections, communication, and conversations with children and youth.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	
Practiced communication and listening skills to improve caring communication with youth.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	
Chose a youth to talk to, a relationship building skill to work on, another skill to build, and information to learn.		1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	

What have I learned that I will bring back into my relationships with children and youth?

How will I know that I am using what I learned?

How will I know that what I learned is making an impact?

Thank you!



vtnetwork.org/askableadult