

How To Create an Environment for Deep and Meaningful Conversations

“The discussions we had were really good and helped me know that many girls share the same worries and that I’m not alone, but that we can help each other.”

– Participant Testimony

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Effective Ways to Connect Your Group More

One of the best things we can do for our girls is to simply be there to listen to them. But sometimes creating this open space can be difficult.

Being really heard and seen is essential for everyone.

Creating these environments where girls can be seen for who they really are and celebrated, and being able to share what is really on their heart and accepted, is one of the most valuable experiences we can generate.

The unique creative approach to Esteem Designz has been developed to gently prompt the girls to explore different ideas and ways to deal with situations in a memorable and completely involved approach, where they can continue the lessons throughout life.

Within this relaxed environment, where the girls' focus is on creating and having fun, they are able to go deeper and open up more, as they do not feel pressured or confronted, but like a casual conversation, where they share and give advice to one another.

We have put together some effective ways to help groups connect even more and enable a deeper space of discussion, reflection and contribution.

Resource Activities

Resources – to help create an environment for deep and meaningful connections and conversations.

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Inspirational Story – Primary School Chaplain

“For 6 weeks I was meeting with a girl in Year 3 one on one to explore why she was having such a hard time maintaining friendships. I knew she came from a broken home, but that was never something she brought up and when asked about her home life she would indicate that everything was fine. It wasn’t until she was a participant in Esteem Designz and we were making our “hearts” that she revealed openly that “I still find it hard that my parents got divorced” The peer nature of this program really allows the girls to speak and support each other, rather than this always coming from the adult in their lives.”

Ideas To Help Create An Environment For Deep And Meaningful Connections And Conversations

Setting Group Rules / Guidelines at the beginning and using them.

Get the girls to come up with the rules, so they can own them. You'll be surprised how some of the girls will stand up for these rules. Remind the girls of these rules if they are getting out of control. You may like to get the girls to all commit to keeping the rules with a spoken or signed pledge – this gives the girls more ownership and makes it easier to encourage the girls in keeping their rules.

The Physical Environment – create a fun and soothing atmosphere using music, soft cushions, pastel colours, soft lighting. Sometimes, this can be hard to set up under room constraints, but bringing along an iPod can be an easy solution.

Snacks and Drinks – the impact of this small additional can be huge. Elevating the girls mood, by simply addressing hunger or thirst. Adding treats can also help the girls feel more special and comfortable.

Esteem Designz Wall / Billboard – set up a group wall at the beginning of the program. This is for the participants and facilitator to add to throughout the program – a positive reminder board. Collect positive statements, inspiring pics, advice and ideas about feeling confident in their true identity etc. You can encourage the girls to be on the look out for what they can add to this wall at home and bring it along. At the end of the program, you could take a picture of the wall with the girls to give them as another memento and summary.

Top-Secret Buddy – at the beginning of the program, each girl is given another participant's name at random – this is now their 'top-secret buddy'. During the program, girls try and find clever ways to make their 'top-secret buddy' feel good about themselves and more confident in their identity, without giving away who they are. Encourage the girls not to focus on appearance but characteristics / personality / actions etc.

Identity Treasure Boxes or Envelops – at the beginning of the program the girls can either decorate or be given a box or envelop with their names marked on it. These can then be put in a secure place all together. Throughout the program the girls add special notes to each others' boxes/envelops – affirmations, encouragements – to help each other know how treasured their real identity is.

Caring Friend Necklace or Bracelet – another way to help the girls develop friendship skills and champion their efforts. The facilitator wears a necklace/bracelet with 5 beads on it; one for each of the words 'I am loving and caring'. When they see a girl do something thoughtful and considerate for another girl, they quietly take off the necklace/bracelet and put it on that girl. That girl then looks for a chance to pass the necklace/bracelet on to someone else who has been a loving and caring. Explain what the necklace/bracelet means before you begin.

Social Activity – before the group starts or during the program, have a social outing together or watch a movie about identity/self-worth together, bake something etc. We understand this is not possible for all groups, but just another idea for some.