



**BUILDING BRIDGES**  
OF OKLAHOMA

## **Why Dinner Conversations Are Important:**

**2021**  
Revised Edition



Building Bridges of Oklahoma is a ministry of First Presbyterian Church  
Bartlesville Regional United Way Partner Agency

Building Bridges of Oklahoma strives to enrich family's lives. Meal time is a great way to boost language skills, increase self-esteem, destress from a long day, and emotional intelligence. All skill sets that are important for building healthy relationships and self-worth. Thank you for taking time to learn more on how you can get involved on a personal level with families. We hope you enjoy just a few articles that give volunteers a better understanding of why we promote family dinners.

~ Building Bridges of Oklahoma Staff

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The logo for Inspire Conversation features a speech bubble icon with a lowercase 'i' inside, followed by the words "INSPIRE CONVERSATION" in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the main text, the tagline "READ • TALK • CONNECT" is written in a smaller, all-caps font.

# INSPIRE CONVERSATION

READ • TALK • CONNECT

## DINNER TABLE CONVERSATIONS ARE IMPORTANT TO FAMILIES FOR MANY REASONS. INSPIRE CAN HELP!

There has been a lot of research showing the benefits of spending dinner time together as a family, and the conversations that occur around the table are vital to helping children become successful adults and productive citizens in society.

Inspire Conversation was started to foster better communication and bonding within families. Spending a half an hour several times a week enjoying a meal and discussing important issues can help children in many ways. Even if your family only has 15 minutes to spend together the benefits can be enormous for all family members.

# CONCEPTS BEHIND INSPIRE CONVERSATION CAN HELP YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR CAREER

As parents we have a responsibility to prepare our children for the world, and a career that they will succeed at. Dinner table conversations help families connect on a regular basis, and this reinforces positive values and provides a support system for each family member. The stories and topics at Inspire Conversation are designed to provoke thought and motivate kids and teens to respond.

Inspire Conversation was started so that parents and kids had a valuable resource that can help them communicate about the important issues and values today. Dinner table talk can even jump start your child's career as Beth Kuhel explains in "[from diploma 2 dream job](#)".

Dinner conversations that are positive and productive can help keep your entire family happier and healthier, with each member having more self-esteem and the tools needed to succeed in life.

## THE BENEFITS OF DINNER TABLE CONVERSATIONS ARE IMPORTANT FOR FUTURE CAREER SUCCESS

- Dinner table conversations boost intellectual curiosity
- A lower risk of childhood obesity
- Less depression at any age
- A stronger bond between family members
- Better communication skills
- Higher self esteem
- Active listening skills are learned
- Enhanced logical reasoning
- A better ability to analyze
- Strong negotiating skills
- Creative problem solving

All these skills can be learned during dinner time conversations, but they transfer into the workplace and chosen career.

## IMPORTANT CONCEPTS FOR DINNER TABLE CONVERSATIONS

- Initiate and encourage stimulating discussions that are age appropriate
- Include stories and topics that teach empathy and compassion for others
- Ask open ended questions that require a comprehensive answer. Instead of asking "What did you do today?" be more specific. Ask about a specific class, or an activity that the child enjoyed.

- Consider the values and lessons that you want to impart during the dinner time conversations. This may require a little planning, but it can be very beneficial.
- Talk about careers, modern events, and a wide range of other topics in order to widen your kids' horizons and show them all of the opportunities that are possible.
- Provide support and make sure that each family member is engaged in the conversation.
- Keep discussions respectful and the topics light. Encourage questions and discussions from every family member.

For more information, please visit <http://inspireconversation.com/>.



## Family Meals: More Than Good Nutrition

If you don't have a family meal each day, it's time to get out the plates. Table time yields benefits that go far beyond food.

***The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University says that the more often children eat dinner with their parents, the less likely they are to smoke, drink, or use illicit drugs.***

The center compared teens who dined with families five or seven times a week with those who did so twice or less.

- Those who ate together more often were four times less likely to smoke, 2.5 times less likely to use marijuana, and half as likely to drink alcohol.
- The CASA says that teens who regularly eat dinner with their families are also more likely to get better grades and do better in school. Better grades are associated with a lower risk for substance abuse.
- Teens who eat with their families fewer than three times a week report that the TV is usually on during dinner or that the family does not talk much. Conversely, the CASA says that families where teens are frequently present at dinner find lots to talk about. Common topics include school and sports; friends and social events; current events; and even family issues and problems.
- CASA reports that family dinners have a similar link to mental health. Adolescents and young adults who seek treatment for depression, anxiety, and other emotional problems are about half as likely as their peers to have regular family meals.

Why? For one thing, mealtimes give children a chance to talk with parents about things that bother them.

- The CASA found that teens that frequently eat with their families are more likely to say their parents are proud of them. These teens say their parents are people they can confide in. They also have half the risk for substance abuse as the average teen.
- Children who dine with parents tend to eat better, too. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics says that children who join family dinners eat more fruit, vegetables, minerals, and vitamins. They also eat fewer saturated fats and snacks, and drink less soda.

For more information, please visit <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=family-meals-more-than-good-nutrition-1-2152#:~:text=Family%20Meals%3A%20More,drink%20less%20soda>.