

HELPING COMMUNITIES HAVE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

A **FREE** planning guide for community organizations



Practical ideas, resources and planning tools to help bring families, local organizations and meaningful conversations together.

One conversation can change everything

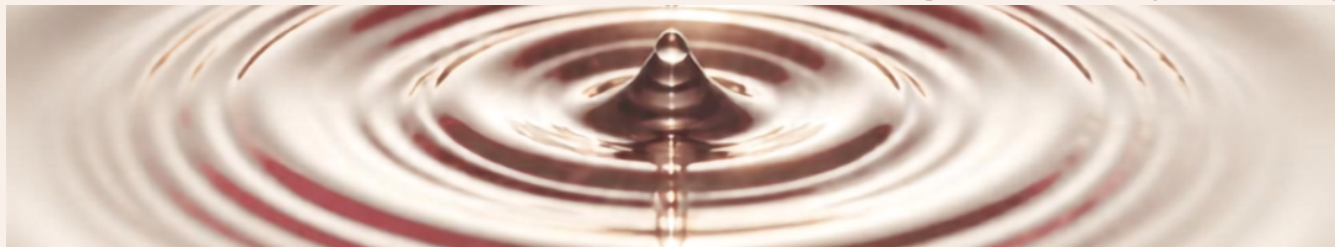


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A MESSAGE TO COMMUNITY LEADERS

Community organizations see needs in their communities every day.

You may work with families, youth, schools, seniors, newcomers, people experiencing crisis, or individuals who simply need to know where to turn.

But no single organization can meet every need.

What if we created opportunities for the organizations already working in our communities to come together — and invited families into the conversation?

This resource was created to make that easier.

You don't have to build everything from the ground up. You can choose the topics that matter, invite people who have something valuable to contribute, and create an evening where families can learn, ask questions and discover resources they may not know exist.



The desire to belong, be accepted and feel understood is part of being human. But those same needs can sometimes create vulnerabilities. Awareness can help us recognize them—and respond with care.



WHY THIS MATTERS

Families rarely experience life's challenges one issue at a time.

Mental health may intersect with family stress.

Online pressures may affect relationships.

Grief may affect school, work and home life.

Financial stress may affect parenting.

A young person's vulnerability may go unnoticed until someone recognizes the signs.

And often, the help already exists — but families don't know where to find it.

Community organizations are in a unique position to change that.

When organizations share knowledge, resources and relationships, families have more places to turn before a concern becomes a crisis.

I don't believe families need another evening where they are told everything that can go wrong. They need an opportunity to learn, ask questions, meet people who can help, and leave knowing where to turn if they ever need it.

**Awareness Creates Opportunity
Conversation Creates Connection
Connection Creates Strong Communities**



A Story Many Communities Will Recognize

A family is struggling.

Maybe a teenager has become withdrawn.

Maybe a parent is concerned about changes they are seeing at home.

Maybe someone is dealing with grief, anxiety, financial pressure or a relationship that doesn't feel healthy.

They know they need help.

But they don't know who to call.

They may have heard of an organization in their community but aren't sure what they do, whether they can help, or whether their situation is "serious enough."

Meanwhile, several organizations may already exist that could help.

The problem isn't always a lack of resources. Sometimes it's a lack of connection.

That is one of the reasons community conversations matter.



THE OPPORTUNITY

Community organizations don't have to work separately.

A community conversation can bring together organizations that each see a different part of the picture.

One organization may provide mental health support.

Another may work with youth.

Another may provide crisis services.

Another may offer recreation, employment or family support.

Another may specialize in prevention.

Together, they can create something none of them could create alone.

Helping Communities Have Difficult Conversations provides a simple framework for bringing those connections together.



RESULT:

Families leave informed.

Schools strengthen relationships.

Organizations connect with the people they serve.

Communities become stronger.



WHAT DOES THE EVENT LOOK LIKE

Four workshops. Four groups. One rotating schedule.

Attendees are divided into four groups when they register. Each group begins in a different workshop and then rotates to the next room at the scheduled time.

Everyone has the opportunity to attend all four workshops.

Allow approximately 5 minutes between workshops for participants to move to their next room.

Workshop Format	What Parents Experience
Four rotating sessions	Parents attend four 20-25 minute workshops throughout the evening
Expert facilitators	Learn from trained professionals and community experts
Resource tables	Connect with local organizations and discover support services
Take-home materials	Receive practical guides and resource lists

Sample Evening Schedule

6:00–6:20 — Workshop 1

6:20–6:25 — Transition

6:25–6:45 — Workshop 2

6:45–6:50 — Transition

6:50–7:10 — Workshop 3

7:10–7:15 — Transition

7:15–7:35 — Workshop 4

7:35–7:50 — Community Booths / Resource Tables

7:50–8:00 — Closing & Door Prizes

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A few important things to consider

Because these events may involve sensitive subjects, a little preparation beforehand can help create a safe and respectful experience for everyone.

✓ **Approval**

Confirm any school-board, church leadership, organizational or venue approvals required before inviting presenters or promoting the event.

✓ **Presenters**

Choose knowledgeable, qualified presenters and review their topics and materials in advance.

✓ **Sensitive Conversations**

Know how your organization will respond if an attendee raises a serious concern or discloses something that requires support.

✓ **Referral & Crisis Resources**

Have appropriate local crisis, mental health, abuse and support resources available for anyone who may need them.

✓ **Privacy**

Only collect registration information you genuinely need, explain how it will be used, and keep it secure.

✓ **Photography & Recording**

Let attendees know if photographs or recordings will be taken and obtain appropriate consent.

✓ **Age-Appropriate Participation**

If children or youth are participating, ensure activities, discussions and materials are appropriate for their age and needs.

✓ **Accessibility**

Consider accessibility, language, transportation, dietary needs and other accommodations that may help families participate.

✓ **Community Tables**

Ask participating organizations to focus on education, resources and connection rather than sales or solicitation.

✓ **Have a designated person or team available during the event**

Designate a quiet/private space and identify in advance who will respond if an attendee needs to step away or requests additional support.

When in doubt, involve the appropriate professional, organization or authority before moving forward.



EVENT REGISTRATION & WORKSHOP SIGN-UP

A simple online registration form can help you understand who is attending and organize workshop groups

Consider using an online registration form to collect:

- Name
- Email address
- Number attending
- Age/grade of children, if applicable (to assist in the child care planning)
- Workshop preferences
- Accessibility or accommodation needs
- Any questions attendees would like addressed

Workshop Registration

Because workshops have limited space, participants can select their preferred sessions when registering.

A simple registration system can help organizers:

- ✓ Plan room sizes
- ✓ Balance workshop attendance
- ✓ Prepare materials
- ✓ Organize workshop rotations
- ✓ Follow up with attendees afterward

At the Door

Have a registration/check-in table where attendees can:

Check in • Receive their schedule • Pick up a name tag (optional) • Ask questions •
Check out vendor/community info tables • Find their rooms

Keep It Simple

A free online form such as Google Forms can be enough to get started. You do not need an expensive registration system.

Privacy.

To be professional and responsible: because you're collecting names and email addresses, add:

Privacy Note: Only collect the information you genuinely need, explain how it will be used, and store it securely.



TOPIC IDEAS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

**We've done the groundwork for you.
Explore these ideas and choose the conversations
that best fit the people you serve**

For a single evening, consider choosing 3–6 topics that best fit your community.

Other topics can become future workshops or events.

Mental & Emotional Well-Being

- Mental Health Awareness
- Anxiety & Stress
- Building Resilience
- Self-Esteem & Self-Worth
- Grief & Loss
- Recognizing When a Young Person May Need Support

Digital Life & Online Safety

- Online Safety
- Social Media Pressures
- Cyberbullying
- Online Relationships
- Digital Footprints
- Online Manipulation & Grooming Awareness
- Helping Parents Understand the Digital World

School & Community Connection

- Building Strong School-Family Relationships
- Creating a Culture of Belonging
- Connecting Families With Community Resources
- Supporting Students Beyond the Classroom
- Knowing When to Refer to Community Services

Relationships & Healthy Development

- Healthy Relationships
- Boundaries & Respect
- Age-Appropriate Consent
- Peer Pressure
- Healthy Friendships
- Recognizing Controlling Behaviour
- Asking for Help



TOPICS MAY INCLUDE con'd

Choose the conversations that best fit your community.

Youth Development

- Identity & Belonging
- Building Confidence
- Developing Independence
- Making Healthy Decisions
- Finding Trusted Adults
- Handling Rejection & Failure
- Preparing for Adulthood

Substance & Risk Awareness

- Substance Use Awareness
- Vaping & Nicotine
- Alcohol & Cannabis Awareness
- Peer Pressure & Risk-Taking
- Recognizing Signs of Concern
- Building Protective Factors

Family & Community

- Parenting in a Digital World
- Talking With Children & Teens
About Difficult Topics
- Building Communication & Trust
- Setting Healthy Boundaries
- Recognizing When a Child Needs
Support
- Supporting Growing Independence

Education & Community

- School Boards
- School Councils
- Public Libraries
- Colleges & Universities
- Adult Learning Programs
- Community Education
Organizations

Not sure where to begin?

You could build an evening around one area, such as:

Digital Safety — social media, cyberbullying, online safety and grooming awareness.

Youth Well-Being — mental health, resilience, substance awareness and knowing when to seek help.

Healthy Relationships & Safety — consent, boundaries, healthy relationships and exploitation prevention.



POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Think beyond your own organization.

Consider who in your community could contribute knowledge, resources, services, volunteers, funding or practical support.

Health & Wellness

- Public Health
- Community Health Centres
- Family Health Teams
- Youth Health Services
- Wellness Programs

Mental Health & Crisis Support

- Mental Health Organizations
- Youth Mental Health Services
- Counselling Services
- Family Support Programs
- Bereavement Services
- Addiction & Recovery Services

Family & Youth Services

- Family Resource Centres
- Youth Services
- Youth Mentoring Programs
- Recreation Programs
- Childcare & Early Years Services
- Youth Employment Programs
- Youth Leadership Programs

Safety & Emergency Services

- Police Services
- Fire & Paramedic Services
- Victim Services
- Crime Prevention Programs
- Child & Family Services
- Abuse & Violence Prevention Organizations
- Human Trafficking Prevention Organizations

Service Clubs & Community Organizations

(Excellent Financial supporters for you event as well)

- Rotary
- Lions
- Kiwanis
- Optimist Clubs
- Legion Branches
- Volunteer Centres
- Community Associations
- Community Foundations



POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS con't

Community & Family Support

- Libraries
- Community Centres
- Volunteer Centres
- Service Clubs
- Community Foundations

Legal & Advocacy

- Community Legal Clinics
- Legal Aid
- Family & Victim Advocacy
- Settlement & Immigration Services
- Human Rights Organizations

Food, Housing & Financial Support

- Food Banks & Community Kitchens
- Housing Services
- Financial Counselling
- Employment & Job Training
- Emergency Assistance Programs

Other Organizations to think about

- Newcomers
- Cultural Organizations
- Accessibility Organizations
- Seniors



Local Businesses

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Restaurants | • Family Businesses |
| • Grocery Stores | • Printing Companies |
| • Pharmacies | • Local Employers |
| • Banks & Credit Unions | • Chambers of Commerce |
| • Local Retailers | • Business Improvement Areas |

Business could also provide items for your event:

Such as food, refreshment, door prizes, supplies, sponsorship, printing, promotional support, volunteers



ENHANCE YOUR EVENT

Choose what fits your community & resources

These ideas are optional—not requirements. Use them to make your event more welcoming, engaging and useful for families.

Local Media & Community Promotion

Invite local media and community outlets to help promote the event and highlight the resources available to families.

- 🧒 Childcare
- 🎨 Children's Activities
- 🎯 Youth Activities
- 🍕 Community Meal
- ☕ Sponsored Refreshments
- 📦 Family Resource Packages
- 🤝 Community Resource Booths
- 🎫 Door Prize Draws
- 🙏 Prayer Team Availability
- 🎤 Student or Community Performance
- 📚 Take-Home Resources
- 📝 Parent Feedback Forms
- 🗂 Registration table
- 🏆 Youth Leadership Opportunities
- 💬 Question & Answer Session
- 🤝 Volunteer Opportunities
- 💰 Local Business Sponsorships
- 🏢 Community Partner Sponsorships
- 🎤 Additional Guest Speakers
- 🩺 Health & Wellness Stations
- 🧩 Family Wellness Activities
- 📖 Book or Resource Display
- 📧 Community Resource Follow-Up
- 🌱 Ongoing Support or Small Groups

Consider involving Adult volunteers & student leadership groups in age-appropriate activities, welcoming guests, assisting with booths or helping create a positive atmosphere for younger children.



GETTING STARTED/BUILD YOUR TEAM

You don't have to do everything yourself.

Start with a small group of people who believe the conversation would benefit your community, then divide the tasks, and begin reaching out.

1.

BUILD YOUR TEAM

Choose an event lead and assign key responsibilities.

2.

IDENTIFY THE NEED

Choose your audience, topics and goals.

3.

INVITE SPEAKERS & PARTNERS

Reach out to organizations and individuals who can contribute.

4.

BUILD THE EVENT

Confirm workshops, resource tables, registration, food, volunteers and activities.

5.

GET THE WORD OUT

Promote the event and invite the community

6.

BRING EVERYONE TOGETHER

Host the event and create space for learning, conversation and connection.

7.

KEEP THE CONNECTION GOING

Thank your partners, follow up and look for opportunities to continue the conversations

IMPORTANT NOTE

This resource is provided free of charge.

Every community event is different. Some presenters may volunteer their time, while others may charge a fee. Food, childcare, venue costs, printing and other expenses may also vary.

While this guide is provided free of charge, hosting an event may involve some costs. The good news is that there are often ways to reduce those costs through community partnerships, donations, sponsorships and potential funding opportunities.



◆ **ONE EVENING**

◆ **MULTIPLE CONVERSATIONS**

◆ **COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**





PLANNING TIMELINE

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU NEED?

**If you want to host your event in approximately 2 months:
Plan for 4–5 short planning meetings, plus brief check-ins between meetings.**

Week 1:

Form planning team • Choose date • Identify audience • Select 4 topics

Weeks 2–3:

Contact speakers • Contact community partners • Begin sponsorship/funding requests

Weeks 3–5:

Confirm speakers and booths • Arrange food • Arrange childcare/youth activities • Set up registration

Weeks 5–7:

Promote event • Finalize workshop groups • Confirm volunteers • Gather materials

Final week:

Confirm everything • Send reminders • Prepare rooms and registration materials

**If you to host your event in approximately 6 months:
Plan for 5–6 planning meetings, approximately once a month, with additional communication as needed.**

Months 1–2

Build planning team • Identify needs • Choose date • Explore funding

Months 2–3

Select topics • Invite speakers • Contact community partners

Months 3–4

Secure sponsors • Food • Childcare • Door prizes • Registration

Months 4–5

Promotion • Registration • Volunteer coordination • Workshop planning

Month 6

Finalize details • Confirm everyone • Promote heavily • Host the event



**◆ Keep meetings focused.
Give each person a task, a deadline and a
clear next step before you leave.**





THE IMPACT

One evening cannot solve every challenge facing families. **But it can change what happens next.**

A parent may leave with a conversation they now feel prepared to have.

A family may discover a resource they didn't know existed.

A school may build a relationship with an organization that can support its families.

A community partner may connect with a family before they reach a point of crisis.

And a difficult subject that once felt uncomfortable to discuss may become a conversation that feels possible.

That is the impact an event like this can make

What can grow from one evening?

Families discover resources.

People learn where they can turn when they need support.

Organizations build relationships.

People who may have worked alongside one another can begin working together.

Community connections become stronger.

Organizations learn more about what others provide — and where they can complement one another.

Conversations continue.

One event can lead to future workshops, partnerships, referrals and community initiatives.





FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

You don't have to assume that you have to pay for everything yourself. Look for funding, sponsorships and in-kind support that align with the goals of your event.

Start by looking for funding that supports:

- Youth mental health
- Family wellness
- Prevention education
- Violence prevention
- Human trafficking prevention
- Abuse prevention
- Community safety
- Youth development
- Parent engagement
- Community connection
- Food security
- Community wellness

Search using terms such as:

“Ontario community grants”
“youth wellness grants”
“family support funding”
“violence prevention grants”
“human trafficking prevention funding”
“mental health community grants”
“community engagement grants”
“municipal community grants”
“local foundation grants”

Don't overlook local funding.

Check your municipality, local community foundations, service clubs, charitable foundations and businesses for smaller grants or sponsorship opportunities.



LET'S START THE CONVERSATION

Every Community is Unique

Start where you are.
Bring together the people who care.
And see where the conversation leads.

The planning guide is free.

There is no obligation and no cost to explore the possibility.
If questions come up as you work through the guide, I'm happy to help clarify the framework or resources.

◆ Sometimes all it takes is one conversation to begin building something meaningful for your community.

-
- ◆ You have the tools
 - ◆ You have the framework
 - ◆ Now make it your own

If questions come up as you work through the resource, I'm happy to help clarify the framework, resources or planning ideas.

-  Email: parentwithpurpose.ca@gmail.com
-  Questions about the resource? Book a 20-minute conversation.
-  parentwithpurpose.ca

Together, we can help every child thrive in a supportive,
informed community.

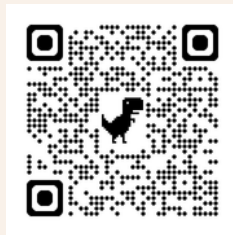


FREE PLANNING TOOLS

You don't have to create everything from scratch.

I've created additional templates to help make planning easier. You can download and adapt any of them for your event.

Scan for More resources & planning support



ABOUT PARENT WITH PURPOSE

Parent With Purpose was created from a simple belief: awareness can change
what happens next as
Prevention is easier than Rescue!

Through prevention education, advocacy, speaking and practical resources,
Lynda Harlos works to help adults better understand the vulnerabilities and
challenges facing children and youth.

Helping Communities Have Difficult Conversations grew from that work — and
from a desire to make prevention conversations easier for schools, churches and
community organizations to bring into their own communities.

The goal isn't to have all the answers.
It's to help people know where to start.

ParentWithPurpose.ca