

CAREER CONVERSATION STARTER KIT

Real Talk. Bright Futures.



Welcome! This kit helps parents, tutors, and mentors have meaningful conversations that help students explore who they are, what matters to them, and what's possible.

Inside, you'll find simple tools and questions that make it easier to talk about strengths, barriers, options, and next steps—together.



START WITH STRENGTHS

Focus on what students do well, what they enjoy, and what comes naturally.



REDUCE PRESSURE

Create a safe space to explore without judgment or expectation.



CHOOSE ONE NEXT STEP

Small, realistic actions build confidence and move students forward.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Each page builds on the last to guide a powerful conversation.

2

Start With Strengths

Help students recognize what gives them energy and what they're already good at.

3

Explore Options

Open their minds to possibilities that match their interests and values.

4

Career Exploration

Discover careers, roles, and paths without locking in.

5

Overcoming Barriers

Identify challenges and build confidence to move through them.

6

Values and What Matters

Clarify what's important so choices feel more aligned.

7

Education Pathways

Understand learning options that can lead to their goals.

8

Plan Your Next Step

Turn ideas into action with one clear, doable step.

9

Reflection and Growth

Look back, celebrate progress, and keep growing.

10

Conversation Check-In

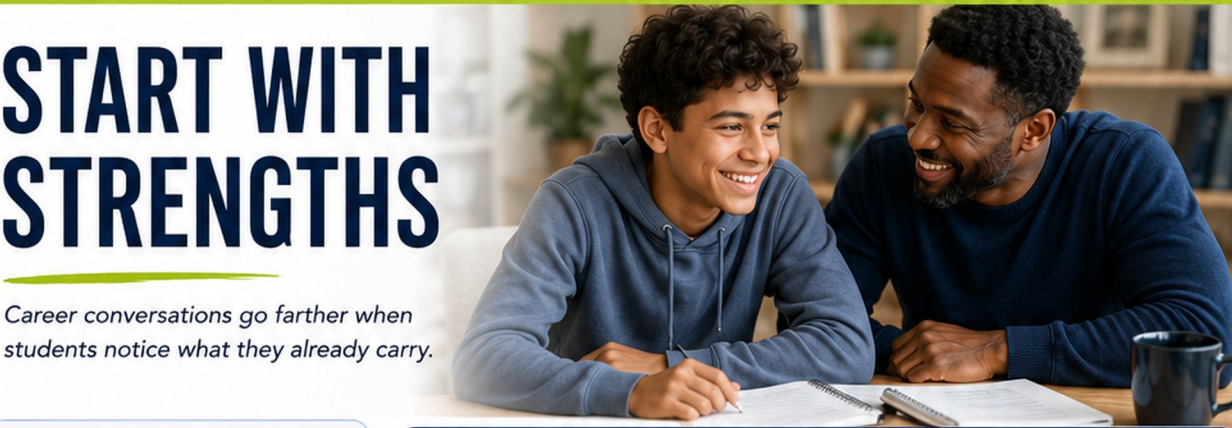
Keep the conversation going with regular check-ins and encouragement.



Career clarity grows through conversation.

*You don't need all the answers. You just need the willingness to begin.
You've got what it takes. Let's take the next step—together.*

“ The best next step starts with a better conversation. ”



Career conversations go farther when students notice what they already carry.

WHY STRENGTHS MATTER

-  Students who use their strengths are more engaged and motivated. (Gallup, 2022)
-  Recognizing strengths builds confidence and a stronger sense of self. (APA, 2019)
-  Strength-based learning improves well-being and academic outcomes. (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2021)
-  Strengths can be developed and applied in many ways. (CliftonStrengths Research)

CONVERSATION PROMPTS
Adults can ask:

- What school tasks feel easiest or most energizing for you?
- What do you enjoy learning about, even when no one asks you to?
- When do you feel most confident or useful?
- What kind of problems do you like solving?
- What have teachers, coaches, or family noticed you're good at?



Quick tip

Your strengths are not just for school. They can shape your future, relationships, and the impact you have on the world.



Strengths are a starting point, not a final destination.
They help you explore who you are — and what's possible.



WHAT COMES NATURALLY TO ME?
Circle the strengths that feel most like you.

1 PROBLEM SOLVING



I like figuring things out and finding solutions.

2 COMMUNICATION



I explain ideas clearly and listen to others.

3 CREATIVITY



I enjoy imagining, designing, and thinking of new ideas.

4 LEADERSHIP



I guide, organize, and help others move forward.

5 HELPING OTHERS



I care about people and like being there for them.

6 TECHNOLOGY



I like tools, systems, coding, or digital learning.

7 HANDS-ON LEARNING



I learn by doing, building, fixing, or trying things.

8 PERSISTENCE



I keep going, even when something feels hard.



MY TOP 3 STRENGTHS RIGHT NOW

1. _____ *There's no wrong answer.*
2. _____
3. _____

One strength I want to use more this month:

_____ 



WHAT OTHERS NOTICE
Invite someone to share!

-  What's something you see me do really well?

-  When do you see me at my best?

-  What strength of mine makes a difference for others?



REFLECTION

Write a few sentences.

How do my strengths show up in my everyday life?

_____ 



COMMON BARRIERS

(AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM)

Pressure often gets louder than possibility.

Every student faces obstacles. Your support helps turn roadblocks into stepping stones.



1



I don't know where to start.

Start small. Pick one conversation, one interest, or one strength to explore. Small steps create clarity.

*You don't need a full plan.
You just need a first step.*

2



I don't know enough about careers.

Exploration is learning. You don't need all the answers—just curiosity. Use resources, ask questions, and keep discovering.

It's okay not to know yet.

3



We're too busy.

You don't need hours. Ten minutes of focused connection can make a difference. Build small moments into your routine.

Consistent moments > perfect time.

4



I don't want to pressure them.

Support isn't pressure—it's presence. Listen more, guide gently, and let them lead. Your belief in them creates safety to explore.

*Curiosity invites.
Pressure pushes away.*

5



Money feels overwhelming.

It's normal to worry. Focus on what's in your control—resources, options, and smart planning. You don't need to have it all figured out.

Financial conversations bring clarity and confidence.

6



They're afraid of choosing wrong.

There is no "perfect" choice. Every path has twists. Remind them that skills grow, interests change, and courage opens doors.

*They can pivot. They can grow.
They can try again.*



Mindset shift

Obstacles don't mean stop—they mean slow down, get support, and keep moving.

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just the next step."



What support would help this week?

List 3 things that would make exploring the future feel easier right now.

1

2

3



REDUCE THE PRESSURE
PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP

- ✓ Listen without fixing. Just hear them.
- ✓ Focus on strengths, not just results.
- ✓ Celebrate small wins and effort.
- ✓ Encourage exploration, not perfection.
- ✓ Normalize change—plans can shift.
- ✓ Offer choices, not ultimatums.
- ✓ Remind them they're not alone.
- ✓ Take one supported step forward.



Barriers are real. So is your impact.

When students feel supported, they build the confidence to keep going.



EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

Explore options without locking in.

You don't need to have it all figured out.
Exploring helps you discover what fits,
build confidence, and create your own path.



Think bigger.

Your future is full of possibilities — let's explore what fits you.



YOUR TOP 3 STRENGTHS

(from page 3)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



You bring something special.

The right path is the one that uses your gifts, grows your strengths, and makes a difference.

Where could your strengths take you?

List 2–3 careers, roles, or opportunities for each strength.

1 (My Strength) _____



CAREERS / ROLES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Think about jobs, volunteering, side hustles, or future careers.

2 (My Strength) _____



CAREERS / ROLES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Consider industries, opportunities, or ways to help others.

3 (My Strength) _____



CAREERS / ROLES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Look for paths that align with your interests and your values.



Dream Step

What's one dream you have for your future?

**It can be big!
Write it out.**

“

_____”



Small Steps, Big Future



Pick 2 small actions you can take this week to move closer to your goals.

1 Action _____

By when? _____

2 Action _____

By when? _____

♡ You've got what it takes. Keep growing. Keep learning. Keep showing up.

TURN INTEREST INTO ACTION

Small steps today. Big impact tomorrow.

You don't need to have it all figured out.
You just need a plan for your next step.
Momentum creates clarity.



Action builds confidence.
You grow by doing—not by waiting.

FIVE WAYS TO TURN INTEREST INTO ACTION

1



Set a goal together

- Choose one focus area or interest.
- Set a goal that is meaningful and achievable.
- Break it into small, specific steps.

2



Build relevant skills

- Take a class, course, or workshop.
- Practice through projects or challenges.
- Keep learning in ways that fit your life.

3



Create a portfolio or evidence folder

- Save examples of your work and progress.
- Include projects, reflections, and feedback.
- Show what you can do.

4



Reflect and adjust

- Check in on what's working and what's not.
- Adjust your plan as you learn.
- Growth comes from small course corrections.

5



Ask for support

- Talk to someone you trust about your goals.
- Find a mentor, coach, or teacher.
- Don't be afraid to ask—people want to help.



MY NEXT STEP THIS WEEK

Pick one action below and commit to it.

This week, I will: _____



Deadline: _____



Who can help me: _____

Why this step matters to me:



CONFIDENCE BUILDER

Why small steps matter



Small steps create momentum and reduce overwhelm.



Taking action helps you learn what works for you.



Every step builds experience, clarity, and confidence.



Progress is progress—no matter how small.

“ The future belongs to those who take action today.
Start small. Stay consistent. Keep going. ”



Action turns potential into progress.
One step today can change your tomorrow.

You've got the insight.
Now take the next step.
Let's make it happen!



CONVERSATION DECODER

When students say “*I don’t know*,” there is usually more underneath.

Decode the message. Respond with curiosity. Build connection and clarity.



WHAT THE STUDENT SAYS	WHAT IT MAY REALLY MEAN	HELPFUL ADULT RESPONSE
“I don’t know.”	- I feel overwhelmed or stuck. - I don’t have the language. - I’m not ready to decide.	✓ That’s okay. We don’t have to figure it all out today. ✓ Let’s explore a few options together. ✓ What would feel helpful to understand better?
“Maybe.”	- I’m unsure, but open. - I’m afraid of making the wrong choice. - I need more information.	✓ Tell me more about what you’re considering. ✓ What would help you feel more sure? ✓ Let’s list some pros, cons, and unknowns.
“It doesn’t matter.”	- I feel disconnected. - I think nothing will change. - I don’t see the point.	✓ What would make it matter to you? ✓ What’s something small that could make a difference? ✓ You have more impact than you think.
“I’m not good at anything.”	- I don’t see my strengths. - I compare myself to others. - I lack confidence.	✓ Everyone has strengths. Let’s find yours. ✓ What comes easier to you than to others? ✓ Let’s look at times you felt proud.
“I can’t do that.”	- I’m afraid to fail. - I don’t think it’s possible. - I’ve had a tough experience.	✓ What makes it feel impossible right now? ✓ What would it take to try just one small step? ✓ I believe you can grow into it.

SAY THIS, NOT THAT	3-STEP RESPONSE	KEEP THE CONVERSATION OPEN
SAY THIS “Help me understand.” → “You need to figure it out.” “Let’s explore it together.” → “Everyone else knows.” “What would help?” → “Just pick something.” “Tell me more.” → “Why don’t you care?” “I’m here with you.” → “That’s not a real answer.”	3-STEP RESPONSE 1 LISTEN Listen without rushing to fix or fill the silence. 2 CLARIFY Ask curious questions to uncover meaning. 3 SUPPORT Offer encouragement and next steps— together.	KEEP THE CONVERSATION OPEN What feels most confusing or overwhelming right now? If you could ask someone anything about this, what would you ask? What’s something you’re curious about, even if you haven’t tried it? What’s one small step we could take this week to move things forward?



REMEMBER: *Curiosity builds trust. Trust builds clarity. Clarity builds momentum.*



Real conversations unlock real potential.

When we listen beneath the words, we help students find their way forward.



You don’t have to have all the answers. You just have to stay curious.

SUPPORT THAT FITS.

No one has to figure it out alone.
The right support at the right time
can help you grow with confidence
and stay on track.



*Great support
changes everything.*

You don't need all
the answers — you
just need the right
people beside you.

FOUR PATHWAYS OF SUPPORT

1 CLARITY

Understand yourself
and your direction.



Get help exploring your interests,
strengths, values, and goals so
you can make confident choices.

You'll get:

- ✓ Better self-awareness
- ✓ Clearer goals
- ✓ Decision support

2 SKILL BUILDING

Build the skills
you need.



Learn and practice skills that
help you succeed in school,
work, and life.

You'll get:

- ✓ Stronger skills
- ✓ More confidence
- ✓ Real progress

3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Stay motivated
and on track.



Get support to stay focused,
follow through, and build
positive habits.

You'll get:

- ✓ Consistent progress
- ✓ Encouragement
- ✓ Goal follow-through

4 EXPOSURE

See what's possible
in the real world.



Discover careers, meet people,
and experience new opportunities
beyond your everyday.

You'll get:

- ✓ New perspectives
- ✓ Real-world insight
- ✓ Bigger possibilities

MATCH THE SIGNAL TO THE RIGHT SUPPORT

! SIGNAL (What I'm experiencing)	👥 SUPPORT (Who or what can help)	➔ NEXT STEP (One action I will take)
I feel confused or unsure about what's next.	_____	_____
I need help building a specific skill.	_____	_____
I keep getting distracted or falling behind.	_____	_____
I want to explore more careers and options.	_____	_____
I need encouragement or someone to talk to.	_____	_____

WHO CAN HELP?



FAMILY MEMBER

Encourages you, believes in you,
and supports your goals.



COUNSELOR

Supports your well-being,
goals, and future planning.



TEACHER

Helps you learn, grow, and
stay on track in school.



TUTOR

Helps you build skills and
understand tough topics.



MENTOR

Shares experience and helps
you see what's possible.



COMMUNITY PARTNER

Connects you to resources,
opportunities, and real-world
experiences.



MY SUPPORT PLAN

I don't have to do this alone. I will build a team and use the support I need.

I need the most support with: _____

I will reach out to: _____

How they can help me: _____

My next action: _____

I will take this action by (date): _____



I've got a plan. I've got support. I can do this.



The right support at the right time can change everything.

You don't have to have all the answers. You just need the right people beside you.

“

Surround yourself with people
who lift you higher.

”

KEEP IT MOVING.

*Small steps. Steady support.
Big future.*

Momentum is what turns conversations into confidence and plans into progress.

You've started the talk—now keep it going.

7-DAY MOMENTUM MAP

DAY 1



RETURN

Come back to the plan. What's my first small step?



DAY 2



REVIEW

Look at what worked and what didn't.



DAY 3



REFOCUS

Adjust the plan and take the next small step.



DAY 4



TALK IT OUT

Get support from someone you trust.



DAY 5



TAKE ACTION

Try something new, even if it's small.



DAY 6



CHECK-IN

Check in with myself. What's working? What's next?



DAY 7



CELEBRATE

Celebrate the progress. Plan next week.



Consistency over perfection.
Every day is a chance to grow.

WEEK OF: _____



CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

- ? What was one thing you did this week?

- ? What did you learn about yourself?

- ? What felt challenging, and how did you handle it?

- ? What's the next smallest step you want to take?



HABIT TRACKER

Track your daily momentum.



REFLECT
I checked in with myself.



LEARN
I learned something new.



TAKE ACTION
I took a small step forward.



CONNECT
I talked to someone.



GROW
I celebrated my progress.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
REFLECT	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LEARN	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
TAKE ACTION	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CONNECT	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
GROW	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



WHAT DID I LEARN THIS WEEK?

Jot down wins, lessons, or something that surprised you.



You're building momentum. Keep showing up.
Keep learning. Keep growing. Keep going.

"Small steps today create big futures."



Keep reflecting.
Clarity comes from honest check-ins.



Keep taking action.
Small steps create real progress.



Keep connecting.
Support makes the journey easier.



Keep believing.
Your future is worth it.



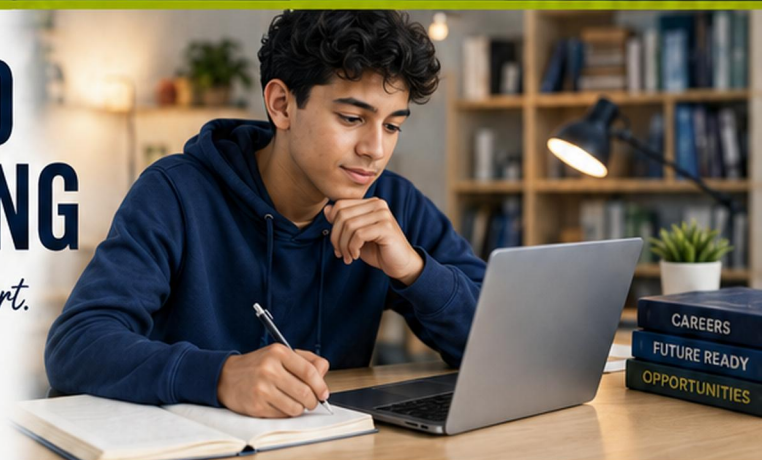
Momentum turns conversations into action and action into confidence.
We're here to help every step of the way.

*You've got this.
Let's keep moving.*

RESOURCES TO KEEP EXPLORING

Turn curiosity into continued support.

The right resources can help you learn more, try new things, and take confident next steps toward your future.



5 POWERFUL RESOURCES

Use these tools to explore, learn, and take action.

1 My Next Move by O*NET



Explore careers that match your interests, strengths, and work preferences.

- Career matches
- Skills and activities
- Education & training
- Outlook & pay

Great for big-picture career discovery.

2 CareerOneStop Toolkit



Find tools for resumes, interviews, job search, and career planning.

- Resume builder
- Interview tips
- Training search
- Career videos

Great for building job search and readiness.

3 Khan Academy Career Exploration



Learn about careers through videos, real stories, and skill-building lessons.

- Career library
- Skill-building courses
- Real-world insights
- Student-friendly

Great for learning and building confidence.

4 Local Community Resources



Connect with local programs, mentors, internships, and community support.

- Libraries & makerspaces
- Youth programs
- Career centers
- Local mentors

Great for real-world support close to home.

5 Portfolio & Resume Tools



Create, organize, and showcase your skills, projects, and achievements.

- Resume builders
- Portfolio websites
- Project showcases
- Digital presence

Great for showcasing who you are.

HOW TO CHOOSE A FIRST RESOURCE

- REFLECT**
What do you want to learn or explore right now?
- MATCH**
Choose a resource that fits your goal.
- START SMALL**
Pick one tool and complete one activity.
- TAKE NOTES**
Write down what you learn and what interests you.
- TAKE ACTION**
Use what you learn to plan your next step.

MY FIRST RESOURCE TO TRY

I will try: _____



Why I'm choosing it: _____

My first step: _____

When I'll do it: _____



DON'T DO EVERYTHING AT ONCE

*One small step can lead to big progress.
Focus. Explore.
Keep moving.*



The right resource at the right time can change your path.
Stay curious. Keep exploring. Your future is yours to build.

“Resources are tools.
You are the builder.
Keep using them.”



NEXT STEPS

Keep the conversation going.

You've had a great conversation.
Now it's time to turn ideas into action
—one step at a time.

TODAY, WE DISCOVERED...



ONE STRENGTH

Something you
do well.



ONE BARRIER TO SUPPORT

Something that's
been hard.



ONE OPTION WORTH EXPLORING

A path, role, or idea
to look into.



ONE NEXT STEP

A small action we'll
take next.



MY COMMITMENT

I commit to taking these next steps:

1.

2.

3.



NEXT CHECK-IN DATE



Let's keep the momentum going!

LET'S CELEBRATE & KEEP GROWING



SCHEDULE CHECK-INS

Keep the conversation going.



REVISIT GOALS

Adjust and realign as you grow.



CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Every step forward matters.



STAY CURIOUS

Keep exploring. Keep learning.
New possibilities are always ahead.



THEIR FUTURE IS BRIGHT.

Let's help them grow into it. Together.



Thank you for showing up, listening deeply, and believing in their potential.

Your support makes the next step possible. | See you at the next check-in!