

HANDOUT #2: ENHANCING YOUR TOOLBOX ACTIVITY: CONVERSATIONS THAT ALLY

Scenario #1: Mariana, age 12

Child: School sucks

Parent: Sometimes it does. Sounds like you didn't have a great day.

Child: Obviously not! After you dropped me off at school, the kids made fun of me 'cause you're a different color than me!

Parent: Oh, that's awful, I'm so sorry! People can be so mean.

Child: They kept teasing me about it and told me that I would never really be part of the family because I look so different from you.

Parent: That must be so painful to hear even if they are totally wrong. How terrible!

Child: It does feel terrible. Sometimes I wonder if it could be true.

Parent: I see why you would wonder that, it's natural, but I want you to know how proud I am of who you are, and your being in the family makes our family's life better.

Child: Are you sure? Maybe a kid who looks like you wouldn't have all these problems.

Parent: I can't imagine our life without you and everything you have added, including making us a family that has more than one race. You are our child, beautiful exactly as you are, I wouldn't want one percent of your looks changed for anything in the world.

Child: I'm sick of those kids.

Parent: You're right, let's spend some more time with the kids from your dance classes. Some of those families don't look like each other either. (Laughing) We need more families that look like us around! I am really glad that you brought this up.

Scenario #2: Jessica, age 14

Child: (crying) Everybody on Instagram is making fun of me and saying mean things.

Parent: Oh no, honey, that's awful. What's it about?

Child: It's because my girlfriend and I held hands today at lunch.

Parent: Oh Jessica, how cruel! You have a right to hold hands like everybody else at school.

Child: I don't know what to say to them, am I weird because I like girls, not boys?"

Parent: Absolutely not! Some girls have liked girls instead of boys from the beginning of time. You're great just the way you are. Do you want me to talk to someone at the school or to this kid's parents?

Child: No, I got this Mom. I know you've got my back. I'm gonna try talking to the kid who started it first. Or maybe I'll send a message to everyone. If I need your help, I'll let you know.

Parent: Ok, well think about it and let's talk after dinner about the pros and cons of sending a message to everyone if you decide to do that.

Child: Ok, maybe that's a bit much. I'll start with the kid first.

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Parent: I'll check in with you tomorrow after school to see how it went. I wish this didn't happen and sorry to say this may not be the last time. The world is not educated enough. I'm here whenever you need me, and we'll keep figuring it out together.

Scenario #3: Paul, age 16

Child: I feel so different than the other kids at school and on my team.

Parent: Oh, that's hard. Glad we're talking about it though. What's making you feel different right now?

Child: The food here doesn't look like what I'm used to. I like rice for breakfast, not cereal.

Parent: Oh no, I'm sorry I didn't realize that sooner. That would be uncomfortable for anyone! You've probably been hungry every day, this is my mistake.

Child: Anyway, I can't eat much food like this, and I don't even care that the kids call me skinny.

Parent: This is definitely something we can fix. I want you to join me in making the shopping list and I'd better learn some new recipes! I was just used to what I'm used to, but maybe I'll like your food even better.

Child: That's nice of you but that's not the only thing. When I get lonely like this, I wish I had someone to talk to in the language I grew up speaking. But I never hear that around here, and my teacher keeps saying how perfect my English is. So, I'm thinking I should just forget it all and work harder to fit in. What do you think?

Parent: No, no, no. It's not your job to fit in. It's your job to be you. I'm so thankful we're talking about it so I can find more people and places where you can speak your language. It makes me sad to realize you haven't been able to do that. How hard on you. You deserve so much more and the more we keep talking about it, the more we can get there!

