

Dear Educator,

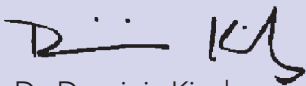
Today's teens are connected by tech, but no matter how connected we are virtually, it can never replace the value of face-to-face conversations, real hangouts with friends, and family traditions that create lasting memories.

This cross-curricular program from *got milk?* and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired is designed to engage students in talking with each other and building real connections. It features activities that support language arts, creativity, critical thinking, and social and emotional learning, as well as a digital quiz focused on foods that connect us.

We hope that you enjoy this program and will share it with other teachers.

TELL US what you think. Visit ymiclassroom.com/feedback-realconnections to share your thoughts on this program. We look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired



REAL CONNECTIONS ARE BACK

TARGET AUDIENCE

Grades 6-12

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The following materials are available at ymiclassroom.com/realconnections:

- This teacher's guide
- Six reproducible student activities for grades 6-12
- Program for grades 2-5
- Reproducible family take-home letter in English and Spanish
- Digital quiz
- Education standards chart
- Feedback form

CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making connections • Self-awareness • Creative thinking • Teamwork | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking and listening • Communication • Descriptive writing • Critical thinking |
|---|---|

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM

Make photocopies of the activity sheets for each student. Review any difficult vocabulary with younger students before completing an activity in class. Visit the microsite link above for a digital quiz and family letter you can copy and send home or post online.

ACTIVITY 1: REAL STORIES

To start this activity, number four sheets of paper 1 to 4 and post them in the four corners of your classroom. Next, read each scenario below and its four choices. At your signal, tell students to move to the corner of the room that aligns with their answer choice. Have them discuss the scenario with the classmates standing in their corner, including the reasons for their choice. Then have a member of each group share why they selected the choice.

- **Unwanted Gift:** You just opened a gift someone has given you. It is a clothing item that you don't like. *Choices:* 1-wear it anyway; 2-hide it in your closet; 3-try to return it; 4-be honest about not liking it
- **Troublesome Texting:** Your friend spends half your time together texting other people. *Choices:* 1-say nothing; 2-start texting other people, too; 3-explain how you feel about being ignored; 4-politely ask your friend to put down the phone

After this introduction, distribute the activity sheet and have students work in small groups to discuss the answer options for each scenario — which would they select and why? As an alternative, you might continue doing the activity as a whole group.



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or email feedback@ymiclassroom.com.



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Conclude with a class discussion about any challenges students may have experienced when deciding what to do and why. Did talking as a group help them see others' perspectives?

ACTIVITY 2: REAL CHATS

To get students ready for this activity, start with a class discussion about a fun topic, such as "the best TV show character." Give students time to consider the topic and share their ideas.

Next, distribute the activity sheet and review the instructions with students. For Part 1, have half of the students sit at their desks and pair each seated student with a "rotating" partner who should stand or sit across from them. At your signal, each student pair picks a topic from the sheet to discuss. After a minute, signal the rotating students to move one chair to the right and repeat the activity with a different partner and topic. Continue in this manner as time allows. You might also assign and change the topics as you go so that students can discuss all topics.

For Part 2, have students work independently or with partners to provide their own discussion prompts. Collect students' ideas for future use.

Note: This activity can be done over a few days to cycle through the topics and allow students to introduce the topics they brainstormed for Part 2. Alternatively, you can use the activity to take a five-minute break at the end of class to let students talk and move around. Invite other classes to join you and expand the conversation and the fun!

ACTIVITY 3: THE REAL DEAL

Write "artificial intelligence" on the board. Ask students to share the term's meaning and their opinion of AI. Ask students whether they believe AI can be creative and heartfelt.

Distribute the activity sheet and review the directions with students. Students will need access to the internet and an AI platform to generate poems.

After students complete the activity, invite them to share their original poems and the AI versions without identifying which is which. Can the class tell which poems came from the heart and which were machine-made? Do they both evoke emotion? End the discussion by asking students to suggest ways AI could be used to connect with others.



ACTIVITY 4: REAL CELEBRATIONS

Announce the name of a holiday and ask students to identify special foods they associate with the holiday. Repeat with more holidays. Then distribute the activity sheet and go over the directions. Give students several days to complete their interviews for Part 1.

For Part 2, provide any additional details and parameters you would like students to follow as they design their scrapbook-style cookbook pages. Combine the completed pages into a "Real Celebrations" book that commemorates moments and meals that matter.

ACTIVITY 5: REAL TALENTS

For a fun way to start this activity, ask students: *Which student in this classroom would you pick to lead us out of a zombie apocalypse?* After students share their ideas, point out that this person was selected because they have certain skills and talents that would make them the best person for the task.

Next, distribute the activity sheet and have students work in pairs to complete Part 1. Students can continue to work as partners or in small groups for Part 2 and brainstorm how to use their talents to connect with others. Provide time for groups to share their lists. Challenge students to implement one or more suggestions and report back to the class about their outcomes.

ACTIVITY 6: REAL HAPPINESS

Write "HAPPINESS" in a vertical column on your board. Ask students to name something that makes them happy for each letter in the word (such as "horseback riding" for H or "snow days" for S). List their responses beside the respective letters.

Explain that the activity they will complete focuses on identifying what makes them genuinely happy. Distribute the activity sheet and review the directions. Provide time for students to share the things that bring them joy.

THERE'S MORE ONLINE

Visit ymiclassroom.com/realconnections for a family letter to distribute to parents/caregivers and "Tasty Connections" digital quiz for students.

RESOURCES

gotmilk.com
ymiclassroom.com/realconnections



REAL STORIES

Everyone finds themselves in funny or awkward situations now and then. Here's a chance to share how you would respond to some real-life prickly problems.

PART 1 Read each scenario below. Choose the response that best describes how you would likely respond. Write down the reason for your choice. Discuss your response with your group and listen as others share their views.

1. **Late Again:** You are waiting outside a movie theater for a friend who is always late. The movie starts in five minutes. *Choices:* 1-go into the theater without your friend; 2-call your friend; 3-keep waiting; 4-go home and skip the movie

My response: _____

2. **Speak Up or Stay Silent:** You have been assigned a group project. One person in your group is not doing their part of the work. *Choices:* 1-say nothing; 2-talk to the classmate; 3-tell the teacher about the problem; 4-do both your part and this groupmate's part of the project

My response: _____

3. **Dinner Dilemma:** You eat at a friend's house and are served food you really don't like. *Choices:* 1-eat it to be polite; 2-say nothing and do not eat it; 3-thank the host but be honest about not liking it; 4-take just one bite of it

My response: _____

4. **Wrong Day:** Your school is having a costume day. You and your friends have planned your costumes carefully. You get to school in costume and realize you have the wrong day. *Choices:* 1-say you don't feel well and ask to go home; 2-shrug it off and call your parent to bring you clothes; 3-laugh it off and rock your costume; 4-consider it a trial run and plan a new costume for the actual day

My response: _____

5. **Tryout Time:** Your best friend just told you they are trying out for the lead in the school play — the SAME part you want to try out for. *Choices:* 1-don't try out for the part; 2-say that you are trying out for the part too and talk about it; 3-ask your friend to try out for another part; 4-don't say anything and just audition

My response: _____

PART 2 Talk about the scenarios with a partner or small group. Discuss these questions:

- Which scenario would be the most challenging for you? Why?
- Has a similar situation ever happened to you? What did you do? How did it turn out?

REAL CHATS

Real friends connect every time they have a good conversation. So start talking!

PART 1

Choose a topic with your partner and talk about it.

- The greatest superpower
- Your most embarrassing moment
- What your friends would say is your best quality
- How life would change if the internet were gone forever
- Your goal for the next month
- Best food to enjoy with a glass of milk
- Three features your future house must have
- The last book you read
- Best places in California
- Time travel: Back in time vs. to the future
- Best ice cream flavor
- Your ideal life 20 years from now
- A job you can picture yourself doing



PART 2

Read the quotes below about conversations. Circle your favorite quote and explain why you like it.

The best way to know someone is to have a conversation with them.

— Neal Stephenson, author

Listen more than you talk. Nobody learned anything by hearing themselves speak.

— Sir Richard Branson, entrepreneur

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

— Margaret Wheatley, author



THE REAL DEAL

Discussion about artificial intelligence (AI) is everywhere these days. What are your views on AI? How does this new technology compare to your own creativity?



PART 1

Write the name of a topic you care about on the title line. Then follow these guidelines to write a creative and heartfelt poem about the topic:

- The poem must have five lines.
- The poem must evoke emotion.
- Rhyming is optional.

Title: _____

PART 2

Now, use an AI chatbot to produce a poem about your topic using the guidelines provided. Copy or print the AI poem and compare it to your "real" poem. Which poem is better? Why?



REAL CELEBRATIONS

Our favorite celebrations may differ, but they all tend to have one thing in common: They bring people together. Often, people connect over food at these gatherings.

PART 1 Interview a family member or friend about a favorite food-related tradition they celebrate. Use the questions below to help you.

Interviewee: _____

1. What is a tradition you enjoy celebrating? _____

2. How did this tradition get started? _____

3. What food do you associate with this tradition? _____

4. How did this food become connected to the celebration? _____

5. What favorite memory do you have about this tradition? _____

6. What is the best thing about this tradition? _____

PART 2 On a separate piece of paper, design a scrapbook-style cookbook page about your interviewee and their tradition. Include a recipe for the food item discussed, illustrations or images, and a quote or brief description about the tradition being honored.

REAL TALENTS

Look around your classroom and you will find people with various abilities and talents. How can these talents and skills be used to connect with and help others?

PART 1 With your partner, review the list of abilities, skills, and talents below. Ask your partner to tell you which traits they believe you have. Check each one that they name. Add any items not on the list as "other." Then repeat the activity by naming your partner's talents and abilities.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> good communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> organized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> works well in a group | <input type="checkbox"/> goal setter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good sense of humor | <input type="checkbox"/> can motivate others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tech-savvy | <input type="checkbox"/> deals well with stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good at math | <input type="checkbox"/> confident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> strong writer | <input type="checkbox"/> athletic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> curious | <input type="checkbox"/> manages time well |
| <input type="checkbox"/> artistic | <input type="checkbox"/> musical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> problem-solver | <input type="checkbox"/> good at fixing things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> creative and imaginative | <input type="checkbox"/> effective planner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> kind towards others | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> persistent | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |



Consider this: Does your partner see you the same way you see yourself? Would you select the same traits to describe yourself?

PART 2 Discuss the abilities and talents you checked with your partner. Then brainstorm ways to use your skills and talents to connect more with your classmates and people in your community, as well as how you can help others connect.

REAL HAPPINESS!



A well-known song tells everyone to: "Clap along if you know what happiness is to you." What does happiness mean to you? Maybe it is a cold glass of milk with cookies on a hot summer day or spending time with a grandparent. Everyone's idea of happiness is unique to them.

PART 1 Fill in each space with information about the people, places, things, and memories that truly make you happy.

<p>People</p>	<p>Places</p>
<p>Things</p>	<p>Memories</p>

PART 2 Now that you have considered things that make you happy, how would you describe *happiness*? Complete this sentence.

Happiness to me is _____



REAL CONNECTIONS ARE BACK

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

It's easy to send a quick text or catch up with people over social media these days, but a virtual connection is no replacement for face-to-face conversations, catching up with friends, or celebrating a tradition with family.

Your child has been participating in a classroom program from *got milk?* and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired with activities that help students connect with their classmates by talking about fun topics, family traditions, friendships, and things that make them happy.

Building Real Connections

We encourage you to ask your child what they have learned and to share their completed activity sheets with you. Continue the fun at home with these activities:

- **Share a story:** Talk about a fun or meaningful time you spent with someone. Where did you go and what did you do? What made the moment memorable? Sharing stories about your childhood can help your child make sense of their experiences. It's also a great way for them to learn about family history and the role real connections played in making it.
- **Talk about tech:** Decide as a family what steps everyone can take to limit screen time and increase family time. Ask your child how they might also put down tech to interact more with their friends. What can they do for fun that does not include tech?
- **Let's chat:** Choose a fun topic (find suggestions on the "Real Chats" activity sheet). Then set a timer for two to five minutes and talk about the topic as a family. Or have each family member write down five topics, place them in a bowl or paper bag, and select a new topic to chat about each day.
- **Real traditions:** Engage your child in brainstorming new family traditions you might try that will spark connections and conversation with immediate and distant family members and friends. Try a potluck dinner or milk-and-cookies catch up on a day that has special meaning to your family. Start a neighborhood walk group or a multi-generation book club. (Movie clubs work, too!) Or arrange to have your child chat with older family members to learn about their childhoods and to share family memories.
- **Cooking connections:** Explore recipes that can become your new family favorites. For ideas on bringing family and friends together, check out real recipes at gotmilk.com/realisback.

