



## *Develop a Mindset for Progressive Conversations*

*Parents have a challenging job these days. Media has exposed children to mature content at a young age, and today's parents are being launched into unexpected conversations. We understand that not all parents are comfortable discussing all topics, but try to rise to the challenge. Your children need to be prepared. The more they know, the safer they will be.*

*As you consider your personal approach to talking with your child about challenging subjects, try easing into them with progressive conversations. Consider what you will need to address as your child ages, then back up, start slowly, and stay steady. Let's use a topic as an example that parents tend to shy away from: sex.*

### FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

Name body parts. Talk about safety and who should and shouldn't be seeing or touching private parts. Why is it important to keep your body clean and present yourself neatly? Lay the groundwork for sexual vocabulary, self-care, self-esteem, and dignity.

### FOR THE ELEMENTARY CHILD

Build upon body vocabulary and cover the basics of puberty. How do different body parts function? What is their purpose? Why are those parts special? What can they do?

Introduce new feelings in the form of crushes. What does a healthy relationship feel like? Kids begin exploring gender identity at this age. Lay the groundwork for conversations about identity, be they for your child or to understand others.

### FOR THE TWEEN

This stage of life is exciting, but confusing. Acknowledge for your child that at some point, he or she will grow curious about what it feels like to touch another person's body, and may wonder what it feels like to be touched in return. What would be a way to explore those feelings in a way that is safe and maintains everyone's dignity? Where are respectful places for those explorations? Who are safe people to explore those new feelings with? How do you choose?

Talk about unsafe people and prepare your child to respond to pressure. Be crystal clear about safe social media behavior. For example, "do not take photos of anyone's private parts nor let anyone take photos of yours!" Your child may also begin exploring his or her own body to see how it works and what things feel like. Acknowledge this and talk about where private and respectful places to do that would be. The best thing you can do for your child at this age is to talk openly, provide facts, and invite questions.

### FOR THE TEEN

Your groundwork pays off here. Overtly address sexting, pornography, on- and off-line reputations, safe sex, pregnancy prevention, sexual assault, conditions that could put someone at risk of being harmed, and perhaps even trafficked. If you are wondering if kids in your community are being trafficked, we can tell you, some are.

### FOR THE YOUNG ADULT

You are preparing your child for independent living. Talk openly and clearly about risky behavior and the realities of the adult world. Cover binge drinking, date rape, dating violence, dating websites, on-line reputations and how they affect employment, and workplace harassment.

*If this has been helpful to you, please visit our website and read the current edition of Every Family School Edition for another example of a progressive conversation.*







## 30th Annual Breakfast on the Bridge

On September 14, 2016, we hosted the 30th Annual Breakfast on the Bridge. Many in the West Hartford Schools regard this event as the unofficial start to the school year. Thank you to all who joined us to celebrate our collaboration on behalf of youth and families. We were especially proud to honor Judy Bierly with the *Build No Fences Award* for her unwavering commitment to our community. Judy recently retired after serving 23 years as the Director of Community Services for the Bridge.

*Top Left:* Andy Morrow, Assistant Superintendent; Juan Melian, Principal of Charter Oak International Academy; Paul Vicinus, Assistant Superintendent.

*Top Right:* Amanda Aronson, Director of Marketing & Communications; Judy Bierly, Award Winner; Margaret Hann, Executive Director of the Bridge Family Center.

*Bottom Left:* Ryan Cleary, Principal of Morley Elementary School; Steve Cook, Principal of Bristow Middle School.

*Bottom Right:* West Hartford Police Officers.

## Upcoming Events



**EMBRACE 11/7/16 @ 7:30PM**  
 Women, join us for a screening of this award-winning documentary and watch for follow-up experiences at our Avon counseling center.



**Children's Charity Ball**  
**CHILDREN'S CHARITY BALL 1/21/17**  
 Our dedicated committee is hard at work planning our signature fundraiser. Consider becoming a sponsor or auction donor. See website for details.

Tickets go on sale in December.  
 Purchase early; event sells out quickly.

**UPCOMING VIEWS OF THE BRIDGE**  
 11/16/16 West Hartford  
 2/23/17 Avon



CONNECT WITH US  
**ENGAGE. GIVE. LEARN.**

*We support our community in broad and robust ways. Your financial support makes that possible. Thank you for helping us prevent and protect; strengthen and stabilize; mentor and advocate; counsel and teach; love and care – for Every Family. Every Child. Every Time.*



**WORKPLACE GIVING**  
 Consider supporting us through workplace giving. You stretch your dollars and help us build relationships. Thank you!

**CORPORATE & SCHOOL WORKSHOPS**  
 Before you react, PAUSE. Community Educator, Joanna Curry-Sartori offers workshops designed to build coping skills and manage today's stressors.



**#GIVINGTUESDAY**  
 This is the second biggest giving day of the year. Please help by **GIVING** on this day and spreading the word on your social media networks.



**GIVE THE GIFT OF A HOST HOME**  
 When you give a child in need 21 days in your home, you give us 21 days to work with that child's family to help things get better. Learn more on our website.

**HOLIDAY WISH LIST**  
 Thank you for planning to support our residential and community programs during the holiday season. Our wish list is on our website.

**PLEASE INCLUDE US IN YOUR GIVING BY MAILING A GIFT IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE, OR BE IN TOUCH TO LEARN ABOUT THE ADDITIONAL GIVING AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT FEEL RIGHT FOR YOU.**

EVERY FAMILY is a newsletter of the Bridge Family Center | 1022 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06107-2105 | 860.521.8035  
 info@bridgefamilycenter.org | www.bridgefamilycenter.org | facebook.com/BridgeFamilyCenter | Executive Director: Margaret A. Hann | Editor: Amanda Aronson.  
 The Bridge is a private, nonprofit youth and family service agency offering a broad range of services to children, youth, families, and adults. Our counseling centers are in Avon, West Hartford and Rockville, and our Family Resource Center is located within the Charter Oak International Academy in West Hartford.