

BIG TALK

Purpose

- To think about what matters in conversations
- To consider how to ask questions that address “big” topics
- To examine our thoughts and feelings on privacy and sharing

Key Skills

- Listening
- Conversation
- Self-awareness
- Expanding ideas

Materials

- ✓ Easel paper or white board and markers
- ✓ Video by Kalina Silverman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deScHJGoVc8&t=3s> [6:23]

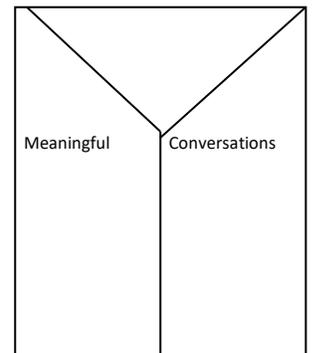
Context

What are we talking about? Kalina Silverman began an experiment to have “meaningful deeper conversations” with people she just met. In this video, students can observe what really happened in these interactions and respond to her approach. They can consider what makes for “meaningful conversations,” and develop their own processes and questions.

For more about Kalina’s work, including additional videos, you and students can visit her website at makebigtalk.com.

Opening

- What is a “meaningful conversation”? Have students gather in small groups around a white board or easel paper. Construct a Y chart (see image) and have “Meaningful” on one side, “Conversations” on the other, and leave the “Y” empty. Every person needs a marker in their hand.
 - Working in their small groups, first, allow a few minutes to come up with and write on the chart as many words as come to mind when they can think of “meaningful” and “conversations.”
 - Next, allow three minutes to come up with a definition of “meaningful conversations” and an image to place in the “Y” section of the chart.
- To debrief, invite students to look at all the words listed (not the definition, yet). What do they notice in common? What is unique? Anything else to add?
- Now, ask a member of each group to read their definitions aloud. Can they flow together to make one cohesive idea? What emerges as most essential about meaningful conversations?
- Continue the discussion with a few other prompts such as:
 - When do we have meaningful conversations?
 - Is there a “where” that they are more likely to happen?
 - Ask each person to pause for a moment and think about a recent meaningful conversation – what made it “meaningful”?



Process

- Let students know they will watch a video, just over 6 minutes, made as an experiment to have meaningful conversations. Show “Big Talk.”
- Allow time for students to write about or jot down ideas about their response to the video before having a conversation. When ready, invite them to share their thoughts and feelings about what

came up during the viewing, and what remains after the video. The discussion can flow easily from their responses, and could also include these prompts:

- What seemed to matter most in these conversations?
 - What resonated with you personally?
 - These people were sharing on camera – did that appear to make a difference?
 - Can “big talk” go too far?
- In our conversations, we are often considering what we want to say and what remains private – how do we make those choices, especially in the middle of a conversation?
 - Without the expectation of carrying out the experiment, in small groups, imagine creating your own “big talk” experiment. Allow time for students to think about:
 - How they would set it up
 - What they might ask
 - Who they would ask
 - What they would do with the responses
 - As the ideas are shared, discuss the importance of listening, confidentiality, choice of making comments and ideas public or keeping them private, and the responsibility if something is disclosed that could reveal a situation of personal endangerment. And of course, do they want to move forward with their own experiment? If so, will they each do them in their small groups or combine ideas for a larger group experiment? Allow time for ideas to flourish.

Closing

- What are key personal takeaways from the Big Talk session?
- Ask students to jot down response to: “Who would you want to show this video to and why?” Then share (always optional).

Extensions

- Invite students to visit the makebigtalk.com website to see other resources and videos and learn more about the Big Talk process.
- Plan a Big Talk screening that students host for the community with follow up conversations.