SUMMARY FROM DALLAS TWST MEETING

AUGUST 28, 2019

This month’s meeting was planned and facilitated by Emily Cors, a chapter leader and graduate student who has been working with the group since early 2019. The topic was “The Art of Small Talk”. The meeting was attended by 6 teens (3 were new to the group), 6 parents, 1 visiting speech pathologist interested in creating a group in the Rockwall/Wylie area, 1 guest speaker/ slp for the parent group, and 1 grad student and 1 slp- chapter leader. The meeting began with a choral reading of the Welcoming Words and introductions that included name + 1 “fun fact” about yourself. After completing the Introductions, all the parents went with our visiting speech pathologist, Karin Manchack, from Mesquite ISD, to talk about the in’s and out’s of ARD’s and IEP’s. Karin was asked to talk to the parents tonight as school gets back underway to educate them about accessing services through the public schools. Karin is an expert in this area and has always been a wonderful speaker with a lot of great advice for parents.

Emily took a brief survey to determine just how comfortable the teens are currently with their small talk skills. She then defined “small talk” and went over the purposes it serves. Next, the teens brainstormed the types of topics which would likely create longer interactions on topics that they shared an interest in. The teens also discussed how the topics they choose to initiate might also vary according to the setting in which they find themselves.

The next thing covered was the difference between open ended and closed ended questions. Examples were provided and were also modeled so the teens could see how closed- ended questions result in a sort of “dead end” to the conversation while open-ended questions are likely to prolong the conversation. The teens were also given a chance to modify closed ended questions into an open ended question which seemed to be good practice for them. At this point, the subject of disclosure was brought up and the teens were encouraged to talk about whether they disclose and if so, in what types of situations they are most likely to disclose.

Emily then introduced the idea of several different levels of questions that can be asked beginning with Level 1 questions that are safe and do not reveal much about us personally (i.e. topics like the weather or TV shows). Level 2 questions deal with personal information but still do not dive very deep so they are pretty “safe”. And finally, Level 3 questions probe into much more personal things within our souls and the core of our identities. This could include our hopes, dreams and fears. This is when we become vulnerable and genuine. The group discussed what types of situations would lend themselves to different levels of questions.

Then a “cheat sheet” hand out was provided to each teen and they were broken into pairs and told to practice their small talk skills. After 10 minutes, they were paired with a new partner. Afterwards, the group “de-briefed” and talked about how they felt making small talk and what seemed easier than it had previously in small talk situations.

The parents were brought back in and the Closing Words were read in unison. The meeting ended and a reminder was given about the September meeting.

Submitted by Tricia Krauss-Lehrman 8-30-19