

# SECTION ONE



## COLOR MY CONVERSATION™

### LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

# SECTION ONE



## GETTING STARTED

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## A WELCOME LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Conversation Coach:

Welcome to Section One of *Color My Conversation*<sup>™</sup>! Thank you for taking on the role as the primary Conversation Coach. Your gift of time and energy in the implementation of this program can do much to impact the hearts and minds of your children.

In the next few months, you will be embarking on a journey through the world of conversations. I trust that this will be an enjoyable and engaging time for you and your children to experience emotional enrichment through the lesson activities as you collectively work together in support of their social communication skills.

Whether you are implementing this program within a professional (i.e. classroom teacher, speech-language pathologist) or a personal (i.e. home school parent) setting, I encourage you to independently explore the vital link between our social interactions and the attachments that they can form with friends and loved ones! The research is growing and the literature is confirming that our time and our hearts are the best gifts that we can offer our children!

Wishing you many successes and special moments along the way! ☺

With warmest regards,

*Rosslyn J. Delmonico*

## GETTING STARTED

### TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

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#### TIPS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATION COACH

There are fourteen lessons within Section One of the *Color My Conversation* program. Some coaches may want to read through all of the lessons prior to program implementation. For those who don't, take a moment to read the Conversation Coach Letters, which can be found at the beginning of each lesson. They will provide a concise summary of the lesson content.

I would also recommend reading through Section Three of the manual. This supplementary section provides a number of helpful tools for the Conversation Coach. For example:

1. **Assessment forms and data collection sheets:** Section Three provides a variety of forms from which to choose. The Conversation Coach can select the tools that work best for their setting (i.e. personal, professional).
2. **Character and leadership development:** Section Three provides supplementary activities that can be used to support character and leadership skills. Should the Conversation Coach choose to incorporate these additional exercises, they can be implemented at the end of the fourteen lessons or embedded within them.
3. **Lesson administration and classroom management:** Section Three provides practical suggestions for lesson implementation. It also provides helpful tips for the Conversation Coach who is working within a large group setting.
4. **Conversation Coach – Adult Rating Evaluations for Social Communication (CARE for Social Communication):** Section Three provides rating scales (i.e. **CARE for Social Communication**) that the Conversation Coach may choose to personally use as a self-reflection exercise in the area of social communication. As Conversation Coaches we are leading our children through social communication-based activities. We will all do our best as coaches when we personally possess the skills we are attempting to teach.

Lastly, look for helpful tips within the lessons themselves. Each lesson provides specific sections (i.e. Teaching the Conversation Path – Helpful Hints) of detailed suggestions for lesson implementation. Additional notes, highlighted in yellow (i.e. NOTES), offer immediate tips for specific activities.

## TIPS ON LESSON MATERIALS AND CLASSROOM SETUP

Your primary treatment tool will be your *Color My Conversation* kit. It will provide most of the materials that you will need for the lessons in Section One. Please refer to the beginning of each lesson for a specific list of items required. The following is a summary of other considerations in relation to materials and classroom setup:

1. **CMC Conversation Path:** The Conversation Path will be used for many of the lessons. The Conversation Stones that make up the path will be laid out during the lessons and then put away.

**NOTE:** The teaching environment should have enough room for the Conversation Path to be laid out on the floor with enough space for the children to move comfortably around it.

2. **CMC Wall Display:** The wall display is a permanent fixture throughout the implementation of the CMC program. It should be set up in a place that is visible so that the children can reference it during their day to day activities. It should be placed on a large enough wall space so that additional information (i.e. motto's, memo's, quotes, reminders, visual images, etc.) can be displayed around it should the Conversation Coach so choose.

**NOTE:**

Professional: For the Conversation Coach who is working in an itinerant position, a pocket chart works well for the wall display as it is both portable and compact.



EXAMPLE: Portable CMC Wall Display

3. **Whiteboard and markers:** A whiteboard and markers are needed in some lessons however, it is of benefit to have these items available throughout the program. Teachable moments can spontaneously erupt within a lesson. These teaching tools can be used to enhance learning (i.e. highlighting key concepts) within those moments.

**NOTE:** The white board should be positioned near your wall display and Conversation Path so that you can access them easily. If you don't have a whiteboard or similar item (i.e. smart board, chalkboard), large sheets of paper can work as well.

4. The room setup will depend on the teaching environment. For example:

**Professional:** The Conversation Coach will likely be teaching in a classroom or resource room. Try to select a room that is free of noisy distractions with enough space for the children to move around comfortably.

Younger children may enjoy sitting on the floor (i.e. floor pads) near the front of the classroom during the instructional parts of the lessons. They can then move to their desks for the seatwork. Older children will likely prefer to sit at their desks.

**Personal:** The Conversation Coach may be working in their home. Try to select a room (i.e. family room, living room) that is free of noisy distractions with enough space for you and your child to move around comfortably.

## TIPS ON ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Conversation Coaches who work within professional settings often have access to a variety of formal assessment tools and data collection sheets which may not be available for the homeschool parent. *CMC* provides the following documents which can be used in either a professional (i.e. school, clinic) or personal (i.e. homeschool) setting:

1. Pre-Post Test Assessment Tools

**Color My Conversation Assessment Rubric:** *Color My Conversation* provides a user-friendly assessment rubric. This four-point rating scale can be used to gain an understanding of a child's social communication (i.e. pragmatic) skills. The *CMC* Assessment Rubric can be found in Section Three of the *CMC* program.

### NOTE:

**Professional:** One benefit of this rubric is that it encourages the caregiver to reflect on their child's communication strengths and weaknesses. These reflections can increase understanding for specific areas in need of skill development. This rubric also provides an overview for many of the concepts which will be addressed within the lessons. As such, it can be informative in understanding the lesson progression.

**Caregiver Interview:** The Caregiver Interview is completed by an adult (i.e. parents, grandparents, teachers, clinicians) on behalf of a young child (i.e. pre-reader). It provides a brief glimpse into the child's conversation skills, social skills, and nonverbal communication. The Caregiver Interview can be found in Section Three of the *CMC* program.

**Student Questionnaire:** The Student Questionnaire is completed by older children prior to the onset of the *CMC* program. In it, the children rate themselves in relation to conversation skills, social skills, nonverbal communication, and emotional awareness. This information can be of great value to the Conversation Coach in the early stages of lesson implementation for two reasons. Firstly, it provides a window of understanding for how the child socially and emotionally perceive themselves. Secondly, this information is helpful when considering how to best set out treatment goals that can then match the child's individual needs. The Student Questionnaire can be found in Section Three of the *CMC* program.

## 2. Mid-Treatment Assessment Tools

**Bridging Levels Self-Reflections:** Like the Student Questionnaire, the Bridging Levels exercises can increase understanding of the child's self-perceptions, which can be used by the Conversation Coach to drive instruction (i.e. goal setting). The following provides a summary of the three self-reflection exercises:

**The Bridging Levels I:** This first self-reflection activity specifically highlights the child's conversation skills and nonverbal communication. It can be found in between the Beginner and Intermediate Levels of the *CMC* program.

**The Bridging Levels II:** This second self-reflection activity specifically highlights the child's social skills. It can be found in between the Intermediate and Advanced Levels of the *CMC* program.

**The Bridging Levels III:** This third self-reflection activity specifically highlights the child's social interactions. It can be found in between the Advanced and Expert Levels of the *CMC* program.

**NOTE:** The Bridging Levels self-reflection exercises provide the opportunity for a child to assess their own social communication skills. From this information, they can celebrate areas of personal strength and identify areas in need of improvement. They can then shortlist some specific skills with which to create some personal goals for achievement.

A compilation of questions from the Student Questionnaire (i.e. Emotional Awareness) and Bridging Levels exercises has been summarized in a document called *Growing Forward: Self-Reflections*. It has been provided for the Conversation Coach, who may want to collect pre-post-test data for research purposes. This document can be found in Section Three of the *CMC* program.

## 3. DATA COLLECTION FORMS

The *CMC* program provides a variety of examples of data collection forms that can be considered. These documents can be found in Section Three of the *CMC* program.

## TIPS ON LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

The majority of the *CMC* lessons follow a similar format. For example:

1. **Conversation Coach Letter:** This is the first document within most lessons. This letter has been written for the primary Conversation Coach and/or others (i.e. family, teachers, counselors, etc.) who might be supporting the child's social communication goals. It provides a brief summary of the lesson content.

**NOTE:**

**Professional:** Prior to the initiation of the *CMC* program, the Conversation Coach should send a letter to the parents about the social communication support that their children will be receiving. An example of a letter has been provided:

Dear Parent(s):

Over the next few months, I will be providing some social language skills training for your child using the Color My Conversation (CMC) program. This multisensory social communication-based curriculum incorporates a variety of intriguing activities (i.e. music, movement, crafts, games, etc.) into the lessons which primarily focus on improving one's conversation skills. Lessons tend to vary in length. Some may be completed within a couple of weeks and others may be implemented over a longer period of time.

So that you can follow along with your child, I will send you an update (i.e. Conversation Coach Letter) at the start of most lessons. These Conversation Coach Letters will provide a description of the conversation skills being practiced within each lesson. At the end of the letter, I have included some questions that you can use to create conversations with your child to help them gain a deeper understanding of the concepts being presented.

In addition to the Conversation Coach Letter, I may also send you some handouts or home practice activities to further your child's ability to understand and apply the social communication skills being practiced.

Your participation and support in this learning opportunity is greatly appreciated!

Wishing you a great day!

With kind regards,

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**Keys and Clues:** As an alternative to the Conversation Coach Letters, the coach may choose to use another document called Keys and Clues. This simple one-page handout is a fast and easy read with bullet points that highlight key concepts presented within each lesson. The following provides a brief note that could be attached to a Keys and Clues handout:

Dear Parent(s):

Our first lesson will be starting soon! In it, we will be learning about how important it is to use our Hello's and our Goodbye's! The attached information sheet provides some key concepts which will be highlighted within this lesson.

Your support and encouragement in teaching your child about this first basic social interaction is greatly appreciated!

Wishing you a great day!

With kind regards,

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## YELLOW CONVERSATION KEYS AND CLUES

*Here are your KEYS to the Yellow Conversation and a CLUE to remind you of why they're important! ☺*

### Our Hellos and Our Goodbyes

Can be done any time or any place!

Can be done with or without words (i.e. smiles and waves)!

Usually open and close our conversations!

Are done the most frequently within our day!

Are fast and easy to do!

Are predictable because we say and do the same kinds of things!

Should be predictable so that our conversation partners feel comfortable and safe in their social encounter with us!

Are best done when we make eye contact!

*Yellow Conversations usually make people feel happy!*

2. **Overview and Guiding Principles:** This is the second document within each lesson. It is intended for the primary Conversation Coach. It provides an in-depth discussion about the lesson content along with important information (i.e. keywords, goals, visual gestures, etc.) that may be used to drive instruction.
3. **Lesson Implementation:** The third document is the lesson itself. It provides a scripted narrative that the primary Conversation Coach can reference in the initial stages of lesson implementation. The scripted narrative is highlighted in bold italicized lettering.
4. **Teaching the Conversation Path – Helpful Hints:** The fourth document is a summary of tips that the primary Conversation Coach can refer to when working on lessons that incorporate the Conversation Path.
5. **Teaching Tools and Strategies:** This is the final document. It provides a brief summary of the handouts and activities that can be used within the lesson. Grade-level recommendations are frequently provided so that the Conversation Coach can select items that are appropriate for the child's age and level of functioning. The following is a summary of the symbols used within the various levels:

**Pre-Reader (PR):** These activities are intended for either younger children or for older children who have learning challenges.

**Primary (P):** These activities are intended for children within the primary grade levels.

**Intermediate (I):** These activities are intended for children within the intermediate grade levels.

**Junior (J):** These activities are intended for children within the junior grade levels.

**Senior (S):** These activities are intended for children within the senior grade levels.

**NOTE:** The Conversation Coach should use their own discretion on the lesson activities. For example, some children may be functioning between two different levels. In some cases, an older child may enjoy some of the younger children’s activities. In other cases, a socially adept younger child may be capable of doing more advanced activities. In all of these scenarios, the Conversation Coach will read the child’s needs, wants, and abilities in determining which materials are most appropriate for use.

Activities that are intended for specific levels will be marked on the upper right-hand corner of the documents (i.e. Levels PR P I J S).

Activities that are intended for professional use only will be marked on the upper right-hand corner of the document (i.e. Professional).

6. **Better Together – The Social-Emotional Connection:** This supplementary letter has been written for the primary Conversation Coach and/or others (i.e. family, teachers, counselors, etc.) who are participating in the instructional process. Its purpose is to highlight the value of communication in its correlation to the development of one’s social and emotional well-being.

In summary, the following quote from the *CMC* manual is worth re-iterating as we turn our attention to our first lesson in the *Color My Conversation* program!

*“Our children are entering a world that they must learn to make their own.  
We owe it to them to offer the gift of ‘relationship’.*

*Relationship is built through the process of communication.  
Communication is enhanced through face-to-face experiences.  
Face-to-face experiences present themselves in the form of social communication.  
Social communication requires both skill and intuition.  
Intuition comes from being connected with one’s own heart.  
One’s own heart becomes connected through experience.  
Experience unfolds within the act of conversation.  
And that is why our conversations matter!” (RJD)*

# SECTION ONE



## COLOR MY CONVERSATION™

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEVELS: LESSONS AND BRIDGES

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#### 1. BEGINNER LEVEL

- LESSON ONE – YELLOW CONVERSATION
- LESSON TWO – SHORT CONVERSATION
- LESSON THREE – LONG CONVERSATION

#### 2. BRIDGING LEVELS I

- THE TOPIC POSTER PROJECTS
- SELF-REFLECTIONS

#### 3. INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

- LESSON FOUR – WH QUESTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS
- LESSON FIVE – SPECIAL QUESTIONS AND PHONE CONVERSATIONS
- LESSON SIX - COMMENTS
- LESSON SEVEN – TOPIC CHANGERS
- LESSON EIGHT – SPEAKING LOUD AND CLEAR

#### 4. BRIDGING LEVELS II

- EMOTION SPINNERS AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS ORIGAMI
- SELF-REFLECTIONS

5. ADVANCED LEVEL

- LESSON NINE – SOCIAL FILTERS
- LESSON TEN – SOCIAL FILTERS IN ACTION
- LESSON ELEVEN – CONVERSATION MOVES
- LESSON TWELVE – CONVERSATIONAL NARRATIVES

6. BRIDGING LEVELS III

- REACH OUT PROJECTS
- SELF – REFLECTIONS

7. EXPERT LEVEL

- LESSON THIRTEEN – GAINING PERSPECTIVES
- LESSON FOURTEEN – CUSTOMIZE AND CARRYOVER

# SECTION ONE



## BEGINNER LEVEL

### LESSON ONE - YELLOW CONVERSATION

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#### 1. CONVERSATION COACH LETTER

#### 2. LESSON ONE - YELLOW CONVERSATION

##### a. OVERVIEW AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

##### b. LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

- GETTING STARTED
  - Materials
  - Core Vocabulary
  - Signs and Gestures
- INTRODUCTION
- BASIC TRAINING
- PRACTICE RUN AND ROLE-PLAYS
- WRAP-UP AND HOMEWORK CHALLENGE

##### c. TEACHING THE CONVERSATION PATH - HELPFUL HINTS

##### d. TEACHING TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

##### e. TEACHING TOOLS EXAMPLES

\*YELLOW CONVERSATION – Illustration of CMC Wall Display

\*YELLOW CONVERSATION - Illustration of Conversation Path

\*LESSON ONE TO SEVEN - Illustrations of Completed CMC Color Coded Conversation

Wall Display (Portable Option)

3. TEACHING TOOL MATERIALS

- a. YELLOW CONVERSATION – Better Together - The Social-Emotional Connection PR P I J S
- b. YELLOW CONVERSATION - How to Practice Yellow Conversations at Home PR P I
- c. YELLOW CONVERSATION - Illustrations of the CMC Wall Display PR P I J S
- d. YELLOW CONVERSATION - The Gathering Song Lyrics PR P
- e. YELLOW CONVERSATION - Yellow Conversation Song Lyrics PR P I J S
- f. YELLOW CONVERSATION – Yellow Conversation Classroom Wall Chart PR P I J S
- g. YELLOW CONVERSATION - Yellow Conversation Keys and Clues P I J S
- h. YELLOW CONVERSATION – Yellow Conversation and Me Worksheet PR P
- i. YELLOW CONVERSATION – Yellow Conversation and Me Worksheet P I J
- j. YELLOW CONVERSATION – Yellow Conversation and Me Journal PR P
- k. YELLOW CONVERSATION – Yellow Conversation and Me Journal P I J
- l. YELLOW CONVERSATION - Around My Community PR P I J S
- m. YELLOW CONVERSATION - Around the World PR P I J S
- n. YELLOW CONVERSATION - Conversation Maps P I J S
- o. COLOR MY CONVERSATION - Mottos and Memos P I J S
- p. COLOR MY CONVERSATION - Homework Log and Goal Setter P I J S
- q. COLOR MY CONVERSATION - Data Collection Forms (Section Three)

4. YELLOW CONVERSATION - GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

*“Smiley Eyes Make Happy Hearts!” (RJD)*

# Color My Conversation - Lesson One

## Yellow Conversation

### Conversation Coach Letter

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Dear Conversation Coach:

The first conversation that your child is going to learn is called the Yellow Conversation. It is a simple social interaction that consists of our Hellos and our Goodbyes.

#### EXAMPLE:

You are rushing through the grocery store with a time crunch on your hands. You see an acquaintance from a distance. You give a quick smile or wave and then proceed down your next aisle. With your grocery list completed, you head to the cashier and pay for your purchases. As you leave the store, you catch sight of the acquaintance who is now entering the check-out line. You smile, wave, and/or wish them a good day. In this scenario, you will have just experienced the Yellow Conversation.

The Yellow Conversation is the easiest, shortest and most frequent social exchange that we will experience in our day-to-day living. Here are some other interesting facts about the Yellow Conversation:

- Our hellos and our goodbyes often act like 'bookends' within our conversations. They are the things that we say and do when entering and/or exiting a social interaction.
- The Yellow Conversation is predictable. We can usually anticipate what is going to happen when we approach another individual. There will be a greeting. We will also anticipate what will happen at the end of our social interaction. There will be a farewell!
- The reason why our hellos and goodbyes are predictable is because they are redundant. We tend to say (i.e. "Bye!") and/or do (i.e. wave) the same kinds of things.
- The Yellow Conversation is rule-governed. There are unspoken rules that guide what we say and what we do. A skilled conversationalist will know how to say and do things that are anticipated! They will use predictable verbal and nonverbal communication that matches their conversation partners' expectations. To do so would be considered socially appropriate. However, of greater importance, the skilled conversationalist will do this because it is expected. The skilled conversationalist is aware that these predictable verbal and nonverbal behaviors matter because they allow the conversation partner to feel safe, comfortable, and valued within the social encounter.
- The Yellow Conversation is culturally sensitive. We may change what we say and the way that we say it depending on the country in which we reside, the culture with which we have been raised and the person with whom we are speaking.
- The Yellow Conversation is a unique social interaction because it can be done without words (i.e. smiles, waves). As such, it is a great social tool because we can use it anytime and anywhere! For example, it can be used in settings where oral communication cannot be achieved (i.e. seeing someone from a distance) or where it would be deemed inappropriate (i.e. in a library, during a school assembly).

- The Yellow Conversation is a strong relationship builder! Within seconds, people will form opinions about us and our level of social adeptness based on how we navigate through our hello's and goodbye's.

Whether we are coming or going, we will typically have many Yellow Conversations in a day (i.e. in the mall, in the grocery line, at the office, in the school parking lot). Your support and encouragement in teaching your child(ren) about this basic social interaction is greatly appreciated!

**SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. Tell your child(ren) 2-3 places where you use a Yellow Conversation in your daily living (i.e. waving at a friend, smiling at a cashier, saying hello to a neighbor).
2. Ask your child(ren) to tell you 2-3 other places where Yellow Conversations can take place (i.e. at the park, in the school hallways, with the school secretary).
3. Discuss what others might think and/or feel about us when we forget to use our Yellow Conversations with them.
4. Discuss what others might think and/or feel about us when we remember to use our Yellow Conversations with them.
5. Ask your child(ren) if there has been a time when they said "Hello" to someone and were ignored. How did it make them feel? Tell your child about a time when this happened to you.

For Older Children:

6. Discuss how technology can affect our desire to use greetings and farewells.
7. Discuss how our use of technology might impact our relationships with the most important people (family and friends) in our lives.
8. Discuss ways in which we could improve our social connections with others (i.e. family, friends, community) by taking time to smile and greet them.

Additional Suggestions:

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## OVERVIEW AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**SAMPLE GOAL:** The child will demonstrate the ability to respond to a verbal greeting (i.e. Yellow Conversation) with the Conversation Coach within an unstructured setting (i.e. entering the classroom) four out of five times without the use of the CMC Conversation Stones. In order to successfully achieve a Yellow Conversation, the child will make Direct Eye Contact with the Conversation Coach and will acknowledge the communication attempt with either a verbal (i.e. Hi, Bye) or nonverbal (i.e. smile, wave) response.

### OVERVIEW

The Yellow Conversation is the simplest, fastest, and most frequently used social exchange that we will have with others. It's unique in that it can be done when words are neither effective (i.e. in the middle of a loud football game) nor appropriate (i.e. in the middle of a symphony). In these situations, we will use our nonverbal communication (i.e. smile, wave) to convey our greetings and/or our farewells to others. The Yellow Conversation is so brief and easy to do that it may seem 'insignificant'. However, this social interaction is critically important! It can profoundly influence how we are perceived by others.

Each day, we are given multiple opportunities to use our hellos and goodbyes within our personal relationships, our places of employment and the communities with which we reside. Successful implementation of these conversational features can foster warm relationships (i.e. friends and family), create an inclusive culture (i.e. workplace) and cultivate good will towards others (i.e. one's neighborhood or village).

#### EXAMPLES:

**PERSONAL:** You see a couple of old friends from high school. You make eye contact with them. It is apparent that they recognize you, so you smile and wave. Instead of reciprocating, they avoid further eye contact and walk in the opposite direction.

In this scenario, it is likely that your opinion about your old friends and your decision to approach them again in the future might shift.

**PROFESSIONAL:** Entering your place of employment, you smile and wave at the front receptionist who returns your greeting with a cheery, "Hey! Good morning!". Your heart smiles inside as you return the greeting and head down the hallway to your workstation. Along the way, you pass a colleague who is staring straight ahead. You have had this encounter before and know that your greetings will not be returned, so you decide to forego the effort of making eye contact and glance off in another direction.

In these scenarios, it is likely that your pattern of greeting the receptionist will be repeated as it is a positive and rewarding experience for you. It is likely that your pattern of not greeting the colleague in the hallway might only shift if one or both of you are proactive in cultivating a different social pattern.

**COMMUNITY:** While taking your dog for a morning walk, you pass an individual coming down the hill who is staring at their phone. You watch them momentarily to see if they are going to look up and make eye contact. They don't, so you look away and keep walking. Up ahead you see the grumpy neighbor working in their yard. You don't know why you think this individual is grumpy. You just do and you don't feel happy when you see them. You make your decision to either risk having a potentially awkward social encounter or choose to ignore them and move on. Up ahead you see someone coming towards you who is also walking their dog. You remember this person and anticipate that they are going to greet you. As you approach them, you make eye contact, smile, and offer a quick verbal greeting (i.e. "Morning!")

In these scenarios, it is likely that your pattern of interacting with these individuals will be repeated unless there is a shift in cultivating a different social pattern.

The Yellow Conversation (i.e. our hello's and goodbye's) is powerful in its ability to shape what one thinks and how one feels about others. Research indicates that, right from our first hello, opinions are being formed that could shape first impressions (i.e. trust) with our conversation partners.<sup>1</sup>

For a more detailed discussion on the social-emotional impact of our greetings and farewells, please refer to your Better Together - The Social Emotional Connection handout.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 1. BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH THE CHILD

If one were to sum up Lesson One into a single word it would be – CONNECT. Our primary goal within this first lesson is to teach our children how to create initial connections with others through the use of their hello's and goodbyes. Secondly, we want to create some initial social connections with them as well. We want them to see us as someone with whom they would want to initiate a social interaction. The following provides some suggestions for ways to create an initial social connection with your children.

- a. **NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION:** Our smiles and enthusiasm for the learning process can be contagious. When we are excited about what we are teaching, it is likely that the children will be drawn to us and what we are trying to teach them. This is especially important to remember when working with younger children or those who are not socially motivated. We want to be seen as a person of interest. We want to be seen as the most interesting attraction in the room.
- b. **EYE CONTACT:** Natural Eye Contact is a combination of looking at someone and then looking away. For example, we might look into their eyes, glance at their face or body, and/or scan other things around them and then come back to their eyes. Eye contact, like facial expressions and body gestures, can be used to create a social connection with our conversation partners.

In Lesson One, eye contact can be worked on indirectly through the use of the conversation ball. For example, as the children are practicing their conversations on the Conversation Path, the Conversation Coach can use the ball to draw the child's attention up toward the coach's face. The coach can then move the ball out of the child's view and move their face into the child's frame of reference. At that point, the coach will attempt to attain eye contact with the child. When eye contact is attained, the coach can reinforce it with a smile or a head nod.

- c. **MEANINGFUL EYE CONTACT:** Many times, we are unaware of what we are doing with our eyes when we are socially engaging with our conversation partners. The eye contact just feels ...natural. However, there are those moments when suddenly something happens in the social interaction that catches our attention (i.e. a smirk, a wink). In a split second, we will hone in on our conversation partner more closely as we attempt to read or interpret what they might be thinking or feeling. In *Color My Conversation*, this intentional eye contact is referred to as Meaningful Eye Contact (MEC). It is an 'awareness of presence' that occurs between the listener and/or the speaker as they seek to understand the deeper meaning behind their conversation partner's intent.

As Conversation Coaches, we can be intentional to make meaningful eye contact with our children to let them know that we notice them and that they matter to us. Our smiley eyes have the potential to make happy hearts. That said, it is also fair to say that direct eye contact can be uncomfortable for some of our children. For example, many individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) struggle in making and keeping eye contact with their conversation partners. Other children may either be unaware of the value in making eye contact or may feel uncomfortable with it for other reasons (i.e. shy, socially anxious).

If a child is struggling to make eye contact with you, it will be important to understand why this is happening and then decide how to respond. For example, the shy and/or anxious child might just need additional time to feel comfortable with the learning environment or to grow in confidence in

connecting with new individuals. Other children may not be shy or anxious. Instead, they may have difficulty sustaining attention and/or may be unaware of the need for eye contact. In this case, the conversation ball can act as a tool to draw them into your presence. For some autistic children, eye contact may not be a problem. However, for others it may be a significant problem in which case, this would not be considered an appropriate goal.

**NOTE:** In all cases, the Conversation Coach should use discretion in determining how to best encourage eye contact. As mentioned, this is a social skill that can take time to acquire and the child's comfort level should always be taken into consideration.

- d. **CONVERSATIONAL TURN-TAKING:** Another way that we can connect with our children is through our use of conversational turn-taking. Conversations typically flow in a two-way direction with each conversation partner being aware of their need to give and/or take their speaking turn.

For some children, conversational turn-taking will not be an area of concern. They will recognize and know how to successfully engage in two-way conversations. This however, is not the case for all children! There are those who can be either hesitant, reluctant or unaware of the need to take 'talking turns' within their social interactions.

It is important for the Conversation Coach to think about why a child might be struggling in this area. For example, the shy and/or anxious child might need additional time and encouragement to grow in confidence or to have a desire to want to engage in conversations with others. As such, the Conversation Coach might select other children to do the activities first so that the apprehensive child can watch, learn, and grow trust before participating in the group exercises (i.e. walking the Conversation Path).

Other children may not be shy or anxious. Instead, they might be unaware of the need for conversational turn-taking. The ball being thrown back and forth might emphasize for them, that they need to keep the conversation going in a two-way direction. In other words, the ball should be kept in play (i.e. being thrown back and forth). Lastly, some children may be unmotivated to want to share talking time (i.e. interrupting or dominating the conversation). In this case, the ball can act as a visual reminder to show these children that 'the one who holds the ball, is the one who speaks'.

- e. **CONVERSATION PATH:** The Conversation Path provides another way for the Conversation Coach to connect with the children. Conversations unfold as the children step along the path, passing the ball back and forth as they engage in dialogue with their conversation partners. This kinesthetically based learning activity in and of itself is fun to do! The Conversation Coach will want to make this an enjoyable experience that the children are excited about because the goal is not about completing a task. It is about experiencing a socially and emotionally rich interaction with another individual.

We can't force a child to WANT to have a conversation with us! To demand it would seem counterintuitive and nonproductive. Though the task could potentially be completed, the opportunity to build relationships would be lost. The lesson activities on the Conversation Path are intended to be a pleasant learning activity that the children look forward to doing! If the Conversation Coach is curious and excited for the opportunity to learn alongside the children, it is likely that their enthusiasm for learning will be mutually shared!

- f. **CONVERSATION SCRIPTS:** In *Color My Conversation*, conversation scripts are written on the Conversation Stones, which make up the Conversation Path. The examples which are provided, allow the children to become familiar with the language (i.e. words or phrases) most frequently used within common social interactions.

The Conversation Coach will want the children to make a connection with the stones; to realize that they provide important information. In order to build this connection, the Conversation Coach will model how to reference the stones. For example, whilst walking the Conversation Path, the coach will look at the stones to indicate that they are finding answers on them. Through the use

of this modeling, the children will then see that they too can reference the stones to find examples for what they can say.

- g. **ERRORLESS LEARNING:** Errorless learning is a learning strategy that provides prompts or cues to ensure that a child will respond correctly to a task. *Color My Conversation* uses errorless learning to create a low stress – high success learning environment for the children in the early stages of the program. In this setting, the children can relax and enjoy practicing their social interactions with the other children and/or their Conversation Coach.

## 2. LESSON SESSIONS

For some children, Lesson One may be a breeze! They may already be initiating and/or responding to greetings and farewells successfully within their social interactions. In this case, the Conversation Coach may choose to go over Lesson One briefly and then move on to Lesson Two, which focuses on chitchat.

For other children, Lesson One might be more difficult to do for a variety of reasons (i.e. eye contact, turn taking, motivation, speech-language involvement). In this case, the Conversation Coach may have the child work on it for an extended period of time, either on its own or in conjunction with subsequent lessons.

**NOTE:** Lesson One primarily focuses on learning ‘how’ to use greetings and farewells however, the ‘why’ is of equal importance! For the older and/or more adept conversationalists, explore why our greetings and farewells matter. Though they are short and easy to learn, they are profoundly significant because they represent the doorway through which we must pass in order to initiate the development of relationships with known and/or unknown conversation partners.

## 3. GOAL SETTING

*Color My Conversation* is a highly versatile program that can be adapted to a variety of individuals and settings. As such, it would be difficult to provide specific goals for an individual child. One sample goal has been provided, however each lesson may have multiple goals set by the Conversation Coach.

Depending on the needs of the individual child, the coach may target a variety of areas of skill development at the same time. The following provides examples of some general goals which may be considered within Lesson One:

- a. Increasing eye contact within structured and/or unstructured conversational activities.
- b. Improving conversational turn taking within structured and/or unstructured conversational activities.
- c. Increasing the use of greetings within structured and/or unstructured conversational activities.
- d. Increasing the use of farewells within structured and/or unstructured conversational activities.

The Conversation Coach will determine how to set specific learning objectives around each of their goals. Here are some things to take into consideration:

For children with language limitations, objectives may be focused on increasing the child’s ability to use a single greeting (i.e. Hi) and/or a single farewell (i.e. bye). This may be the child’s personal best!

For other children, objectives may be focused on increasing the child’s ability to use a variety of greetings (i.e. Hi! Hello! Good morning!) and/or a variety of farewells (i.e. Bye for now, See ya later, Goodbye).

For the more skilled conversationalists, objectives may be focused on improving the child's ability to recognize and/or use appropriate greetings and farewells based on independent factors (i.e. age, familiarity, position, etc.) that are influenced by the conversation partner's relationship with the child. For example, the Conversation Coach may teach the child when it is appropriate to use generic (i.e. Hi!), formal (i.e. Good morning) or stylized (i.e. Waddup!) greetings. Goals which focus on speech context and style will be more relevant for the older children (i.e. Levels I J S)

In addition to the preceding goals, the Conversation Coach may find that other social communication skills (i.e. joint attention, social referencing) will improve directly and/or indirectly through the teaching of this lesson.

**NOTE:** Throughout the *CMC* program, the Conversation Coach will start off by teaching the learning concepts within a structured setting. Once the skills are acquired, the coach will provide opportunities for the children to transfer them into less structured situations. Carryover is encouraged to begin as soon as children are ready. Specific suggestions for carryover are provided within the Expert Section of the *CMC* program.

Many children with special needs should be able to achieve the Yellow Conversation since the verbal demands are limited. The Conversation Coach will set goals that are appropriate to the child's level of functioning. For some children (i.e. nonverbal), the primary goal may be to simply acknowledge the presence of another individual through eye contact. For others, augmentative communication devices might be used to communicate their greetings and/or farewells.

#### 4. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes for Grades K through Twelve are provided within each lesson for the Conversation Coach who is implementing the lessons within an academic setting.

#### 5. TERMINOLOGY

For a complete summary of terms used within the *CMC* program, please refer to the Terminology, Sign Language and Gestures Summary section of the manual. The following provides a list of some of the terms introduced within Lesson One:

**CONVERSATION COACH:** This term refers to the adult who is administering the *CMC* program. The role of the primary Conversation Coach is to provide the support required to help the child find success with their social communication skills. In a professional setting, this term might be extended as well to parents, teachers, and other individuals who are supporting the primary Conversation Coach with the lesson implementation.

**CONVERSATION PATH:** This is the sequence of color-coded floor stones that represent the distinct features of a conversation.

**CONVERSATION RECIPES AND SCRIPTS:** This term is used to describe a "warm-up" or "brain gymnastics" activity that can be done prior to or within a lesson. In it, the Conversation Coach provides pictures or images of people engaged in conversations. Through discussion, the children reflect on the setting, the situation, and the social interaction transpiring between the individuals.

**CONVERSATION TOOLS:** Conversation tools are the 'distinct or conversational features' that make up a conversation (i.e. Hellos, Goodbyes, Conversation Starters, Conversation Stoppers, Topics of Conversation, Comments, Questions, and Topic Changers).

**DIRECT EYE CONTACT:** This term is used to describe when we look directly into someone's eyes.

**HELLOS AND GOODBYES:** These terms are practical and easy to remember. They can be used interchangeably with greetings and farewells.

**MEANINGFUL EYE CONTACT:** This term is used to describe eye contact which is either intended to gain information from or offer information to our conversation partner/s. It is an 'awareness of presence' that occurs between the listener and the speaker as they seek to understand the deeper meaning behind their conversation partner's words or actions.

**NATURAL EYE CONTACT:** This term is used to describe eye contact that combines looking at a person and looking away at other things around them.

**YELLOW CONVERSATION:** In Color My Conversation, we use very few abstract words. We want to keep the language simple and practical. The Yellow Conversation is one of the few abstract terms used within the program. We use this term because both the Hello and Goodbye stones happen to be yellow.

## 6. SIGNS AND GESTURES

For a complete summary of signs and gestures used within the *CMC* program, please refer to the Terminology, Sign Language, and Gestures Summary section of the manual. The following provides abbreviated descriptions for the signs and gestures that can be introduced within Lesson One.

**Conversation:** Alternatively, move open hands face up back and forth in front of yourself. The ASL sign for 'discussion' is used.

**Goodbye:** Open your palm - fold your fingers down - open your palm.

**Hello:** Do an open-handed wave back and forth.

**Look:** Use your middle and index fingers - point to your eyes – turn fingers away from eyes.

**Place:** Hand open with palm down – move it in a horizontal circle in front of you.

**Smile:** Use index fingers – draw them up at the corners of your mouth.

**Time:** Use index finger - point to your wrist.

**Words:** Use index finger and thumb on one hand to tap index finger on other hand.

**Yellow:** With hand in the Y position - move it back and forth. This sign is used for the term, Yellow Conversation.

**NOTE:** The *CMC* program implements the use of either natural gestures or American Sign Language (ASL) within its lessons. The use of these gestures is primarily used with the younger children, for those with significant developmental disabilities and/or for those who are not socially motivated. The intent is not to teach the children to use a signing system. Rather it is intended to demonstrate to the children that conversation partners are agents of information; not only by the words they say but by the movements (i.e. gestures) they make. It is imperative that children learn to watch so that they can watch to learn. As such, *CMC* uses oral language as much as required but only as necessary. If nonverbal communication is sufficient enough to portray one's message (i.e. motioning someone to come), then it should be used.

## 7. FINAL REFLECTIONS

One of the greatest gifts that we can offer our children is to show them how to use greetings and farewells. As we model their use within our own social interactions, we demonstrate to the children that our hellos and our goodbyes matter!

Before we leave this section, there is one more thought worth mentioning! Thus far, our discussion has focused primarily on our Hellos. However, it is important to note that our Goodbyes have as great an importance within our relationships. In some ways, they are even more important!

Think about the child who is going to sleep at night and afraid to let go of their parent; asking for just one more kiss, one more hug, or one more story. Think about the goodbyes that we experience as adults (i.e. family moving, loved ones passing away). Separation can be very difficult for all of us at times! This is especially true for those individuals with whom we are most deeply attached!

A wonderful strategy that wraps around the process of saying goodbye is the use of 'Bridging'.<sup>2</sup> It can connect our current moment of togetherness with the next moment that we will share!

### EXAMPLE:

Most of the time when our social interactions are done, we will typically say, "Goodbye". We would all agree that this is a polite, appropriate and considerate thing to do! We could even make our farewell more colorful by saying something like, "Goodbye and I hope that you have a great day!"

However, neither of these options connect or 'bridge' us to our next encounter. An example of bridging might be, "Goodbye. I hope you have a great day and I'm sure looking forward to seeing you \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. in the morning for breakfast, next week in our session, etc.)".

What an AWESOME way to connect our current goodbyes to our next hellos. What a beautiful way to build connections with the significant people in our lives!

**NOTE:** As previously mentioned, eye contact can be very uncomfortable for some individuals (i.e. social anxiety, Autism Spectrum Disorder, cultural variations, etc.). As such, the coach should use their discretion in determining whether or not to make this an expectation.

**Social Referencing:** Typically, by the age of 2-3 years, children are engaging in early conversations. They are able to look at people for a long time and can follow simple social cues. *Color My Conversation* has been designed for children who have sufficient social referencing skills so as to be able to engage in conversation with others. Children who are not able to socially reference, should participate in a program that can develop these skills prior to the implementation of the CMC program.

<sup>1</sup> McAleer P, Todorov A, Belin P (2014) How Do You Say 'Hello'? Personality Impressions from Brief Novel Voices. PLoS ONE 9(3): e90779. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0090779>

<sup>2</sup> Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2013). Hold on to your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers. (pp. 20-26) Toronto: Vintage Canada.

# Better Together

## The Social-Emotional Connection

### Our Hellos and our Goodbyes

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Dear Conversation Coach:

In Lesson One of Color My Conversation, your child will be learning about greetings and farewells! These verbal exchanges are so brief and easy to do that they may seem insignificant. And yet, they are actually very powerful in initiating a successful social encounter with another individual. Let's take a moment to look at the complexity of a simple 'hello'!

Firstly, we enter into physical proximity with someone and must immediately decide what to do with our eyes. We can make direct eye contact with them. We can glance at them and then look away or we can divert our eyes in another direction. Eye contact can be very intimate and the truth is that we may do any or all of these things depending on the setting and the situation.

Secondly, we will employ other forms of nonverbal communication to either acknowledge or ignore the individual's presence. Through our use of facial expressions and body gestures we will portray a message of acceptance (i.e. smiles, waves, hugs, head nods) or rejection (i.e. sneers, head turn).

Thirdly, we will make decisions about how to best acknowledge the individual through our verbal communication. The skilled conversationalist will consider independent factors (i.e. age, familiarity, position of authority) to select a greeting that matches the relationship that they have with the individual. For example, a formal greeting (i.e. Good morning) may be used in some situations and a more stylized greetings (i.e. Hey, buddy!) may be used in others.

Our 'hellos' are the first step in initiating an encounter with another individual. They can become the perfect opportunity to make a great first impression! They can also be used to initiate beautiful moments with friends and loved ones.

Our farewells are of equal importance! Imagine what is involved in those moments when we separate from others. We are literally 'letting go' of the social encounter that has just taken place. Through our use of eye contact, facial expressions, body gestures, and choice of words, we have an opportunity to validate our conversation partner in a way that says, "Hey, I'm leaving now, but I see you, and you matter to me!"

A wonderful strategy that wraps around the process of saying goodbye is the use of 'Bridging' (Neufeld, G., Mate, G. (2013). This is an amazing strategy to use with our loved ones as it can connect our current moment of togetherness with the next moment that we will share!

**BRIDGING EXAMPLE:** Most of the time when our social interactions are done, we will typically say, "Goodbye". We would all agree that this is a polite, appropriate and considerate thing to do! We could even expand our farewell by saying something like, "Goodbye and I hope that you have a great day!" However, neither of these options 'bridge' us to our next encounter. An example of bridging might be, "Goodbye. I hope you have a great day and I'm sure looking forward to seeing you \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. after class, later tonight!)" What an AWESOME way to connect our current goodbyes to our next hellos. What a beautiful way to build connections with the significant people in our lives!

*Hellos & Goodbyes – Simple Yet Powerful Social Emotional Connectors!*

<sup>1</sup>Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2013). Hold on to your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers. (pp. 20-26) Toronto: Vintage Canada.



## HOW TO PRACTICE YELLOW CONVERSATIONS AT HOME

### Materials needed:

- Scissors
- Yellow construction paper
- Black felt pen
- Ball

1. Cut out two yellow Conversation stones.
2. On one stone, draw a stick man (or write the word Hello) in the center of the stone. Divide the stone into quadrants and write four examples of greetings in the spaces created (i.e. Hi, Hey, Morning, Good afternoon).
3. On the second stone, draw a stick man (or write the word Goodbye) in the center of the stone. Divide the stone into quadrants and write four examples of farewells in the spaces created (i.e. Goodbye, Bye, Bye for now, See you soon, See you later alligator).
4. Place the stones on the floor. Now you are ready to have your Yellow Conversation.
5. Take your ball and stand beside the Hello stone. Toss the ball to your child as you say one of the greetings. Your child will throw the ball back to you as he/she responds to your greeting. Now step beside the Goodbye stone. Toss the ball back to your child as you say one of the farewells. Your child will throw the ball back to you as he/she responds to your farewell.
6. Now you can reverse the roles and let your child start the Yellow Conversation with you.

### Hello



### Goodbye



**Illustration of CMC Wall Display**  
**YELLOW CONVERSATION**



## THE GATHERING SONG

### SONG LYRICS

“Here We Go”

**Conversations - Conversations**

**Here we go! Here we go!**

*(Smile and gesture for the children to come to the seating area)*

**Conversations - Conversations**

**Here we go! Here we go!**

*(Continue to gather the children through your nonverbal communication as they settle themselves and prepare for the learning lesson)*

“Some Sing with Her - Some Sing with Me”

*(Optional - A musical round can be introduced here)*

**Conversations – Conversations**

**Here we go! Here we go!**

**Conversations - Conversations**

**Here we go! Here we go!**

**Conversations**

“A Little Quieter”

*(Say ‘sh’, smile and sing the word quietly to the settle children)*

**Conversations**

“Even quieter”

*(Smile, nod and sing the last word more quietly)*

**Conversations**

**Written & Composed By:**  
**Rossllyn J. Delmonico © 2013**

**PURPOSE:** The Hello Chant can be used as a gathering activity for children at Levels I J S (See Lesson Two). Alternatively, the Conversation Coach may consider another type of gathering activity.

## YELLOW CONVERSATION SONG LYRICS

Oh, *YELLOW* Conversations  
There's not much that I say  
Just a *HELLO* and a *GOODBYE*  
And I'll be on my way  
(Repeat)

I can have them any *time*  
I can have them any *place*  
I don't need to use my *words*  
There is another way  
I look at you and *smile*  
I look at you and *wave*  
These little things I do  
To wish you a good day

Oh, *YELLOW* Conversations  
There's not much that I say  
Just a *HELLO* and a *GOODBYE*  
And I'll be on my way!!!

Written & Composed By:  
Rosslyn J. Delmonico

**PURPOSE:** The lyrics would be spoken rather than sung for Levels I J S.

## YELLOW CONVERSATION CLASSROOM WALL CHART

**Conversation Coach Instructions:** Print and cut out this small wall chart. Fill the second column with examples of greetings and farewells for the children to select from (i.e. written words, line drawings, print photo images).

These signs can be placed by the door to the room from which you teach your lessons. When you welcome your children (i.e. in the morning) or say your goodbyes (i.e. at the end of the day), they can look at the sign and select their own greeting or farewell to use with you.

----- cut here -----

<i>Remember to use your greetings and farewells</i>	<i>We can use our body and we can use our words!</i>
<b>HELLO</b>	
<b>GOODBYE</b>	

## YELLOW CONVERSATION KEYS AND CLUES

Here are your KEYS to the Yellow Conversation and a CLUE  
to remind you of why they're important! 😊

### *Our Hellos and Our Goodbyes*

Can be done any time or any place!

Can be done with or without words (i.e. smiles and waves)!

Usually open and close our conversations!

Are done the most frequently within our day!

Are fast and easy to do!

Are predictable because we say and do the same kinds of things!

Should be predictable so that our conversation partners feel comfortable and safe in their social encounter with us!

Are best done when we make eye contact!

*Yellow Conversations usually make people feel happy!*

# YELLOW CONVERSATION and ME

## WORKSHEET

*Yellow Conversations or our hello's and 'goodbyes are fast and easy to do! The best thing about them is that they can be done any time or any place because we don't need to use our words. We can use our hands (i.e. wave) or our faces (i.e. smile, wink) to do the talking for us. This is called using our body language. Draw some pictures about the Yellow Conversation in the spaces below:*

<b>I have Yellow Conversations in these places...</b>	<b>I have Yellow Conversations with these people...</b>
<b>This is what a Yellow Conversation looks like to me...</b>	

# YELLOW CONVERSATION and ME

## WORKSHEET

Yellow Conversations are very QUICK! They just have a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_. The best thing about a Yellow Conversation is that we can have them without using words. We can use our hands (i.e. wave) or our faces (i.e. smile, wink) to do the talking for us. This is called, using our \_\_\_\_\_.

**Places where I may have a Yellow Conversation:**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**Greetings are something that I do at the beginning of a conversation.  
My favorite way to greet people is to say:**

_____	_____
_____	_____

**Farewells are something that I do at the end of a conversation.  
My favorite way to say farewell to someone is to say:**

_____	_____
_____	_____

*On the back of this worksheet, draw a picture of what you think of when you imagine a Yellow Conversation!*



# YELLOW CONVERSATION and ME

## JOURNAL

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*Draw a picture of you practicing one of the Yellow Conversations you had this week and then tell us about it. 😊*