



# ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD IN TIMES OF CRISIS

A GUIDE FOR **PARENTS & FAMILIES**

*(Adapted from **The Common Good in Times of Crisis** and student activities)*



MAKING  
CARING  
COMMON  
PROJECT



FACING  
HISTORY &  
OURSELVES

In partnership with





## INTRODUCTION

We live and are raising children in a time when our lives are impacted by increasingly complex global crises. We continue to grapple with the loss and changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Extreme weather events—from floods to wildfires—occur with increasing frequency and intensity. Economic challenges, climate change, and violence continue to push people to cross borders.

These changes can feel overwhelming. But they also present an opportunity to consider the idea of the “common good” and how even actions that seem small can make a difference far beyond one’s own family and community.

This resource invites families to explore complex global issues together and to think through how their actions and the actions of leaders can help to promote the common good in times of crisis. Before engaging in these conversations with teens, we encourage adults to read through our **Current Events Strategies for Parents and Teens**, which has helpful tips, reflections, and resources to guide these discussions.

*Note: This resource is designed for families to work through over several days or weeks. It’s not necessary (though is certainly okay!) to complete in one sitting.*

# 01

## CONSIDER HOW WE ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED

*Reflect on the following questions with your teen:*

- What do you think it means to be "interconnected?"
- Brainstorm an issue that demonstrates our interconnectedness and think through how that issue impacts people living in different communities.
- Look at the headlines on the front page of a reputable news source (such as the [Associated Press](#) or [National Public Radio](#)), and then discuss together:
  - How do the stories in the news reflect our interconnectedness?
  - What are some other examples of how people are interconnected in the world today?



# 02

## REFLECT ON THE COMMON GOOD

*Review the following quotes about the common good with your teen and together think through the discussion questions below:*

"The common good is about how we live together in community. It's about the ethical ideals we strive for together, the benefits and burdens we share, the sacrifices we make for one another. It's about the lessons we learn from one another about how to live a good and decent life."

- *Philosopher Michael Sandel*

"Appeals to the common good urge us to view ourselves as members of the same community, reflecting on broad questions concerning the kind of society we want to become and how we are to achieve that society. While respecting and valuing the freedom of individuals to pursue their own goals, the common-good approach challenges us also to recognize and further those goals we share in common."

- *The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does it look like when someone is acting to promote the common good?
- What role do you think empathy plays in efforts to promote the common good?
- Think of a time when someone in our family or in your school or community acted to promote the common good. What did they do and how did their actions impact others?



# 03

## CONSIDER YOUR OWN **AGENCY**

*What choices can individuals make to promote the common good in times of crisis?*

Choose one crisis, such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, or global migration, to talk through with your teen. Our [Current Events Strategies for Parents and Teens resource](#) has recommendations for finding reliable news sources about these topics.

**Reflect on these questions:**

- Why does this issue matter to me?
- Why does this issue matter to my community?
- Why does this issue matter to the world?
- Who do you think is most impacted by this issue? How?

**Then, think through the following questions about concrete actions that your family and others can take. Write down your answers.**

- What actions can I take to help others related to this issue?
- What actions can other individuals in my community take?
- What actions can leaders or politicians take?



# 04

## CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

*Based on your responses to the previous questions, create an action plan for how you and your teen will promote the common good based on the crisis you selected. This doesn't need to be detailed, but should include the following:*

- The issue you have chosen and your responses to why it matters to you, your community, and the world.
- A clear and specific goal that you and your child want to achieve related to the issue you selected.

*Example:* Climate change matters because it affects the things that I love, like my favorite hiking trails and fishing spots. In my city, the weather is also changing, which has meant hotter summers and colder winters. I also worry about how climate change will impact the future, like whether there will be enough food and water for everyone.

*Example:* One thing we can do that is positive for the environment is to reduce the amount of trash that our family produces. To do this, we will research how we can start composting our food scraps. When we learn about composting, we will share that information with our neighbors and will encourage them to compost, as well. We also will write to our mayor's office to urge the city to set up a free composting program for residents.

# 05

## KEEP IT GOING!

Every few months, or when an issue arises that your teen is passionate about, check in about how the issue connects back to the common good and how your family can be part of the solution. Making this a habit can develop your child's sense of agency in the face of crisis—and can have real-world impact!

