

CONVERSATION STARTERS: TALKING TO MY RELATIONSHIPS ABOUT LEAVING THE U.S.

How can I talk to the important people in my life about potentially leaving the country?

The conversation starters below are designed to support you when talking to your family, friends, and loved ones about leaving the U.S. Each conversation starter includes bullet points that you can use or adapt to share how you feel about your undocumented status and your reasons for wanting to live elsewhere. Some bullet points include common reactions that people around you may have. We have compiled these reactions by talking to formerly undocumented individuals who have left the U.S.

Conversations like these can be very difficult and emotional. Our hope is that this worksheet will help prepare you to enter them with clarity, sincerity, and intention. Although you can't know for sure how people are going to react, you can prepare for different possibilities and brainstorm responses. Remember that your loved ones might have strong reactions and opinions, but ultimately, the decision to stay or leave is completely yours.

Only you know what is right for you.

*If you find yourself in distress or in need of support while engaging in this activity, check out our [mental health page](https://immigrantsrising.org/mentalhealth) (immigrantsrising.org/mentalhealth) for resources.

I've been thinking about leaving the U.S. because...

- I'm tired of being undocumented. I'm tired of the uncertainty, instability, and insecurity that comes with my status. It is challenging to pay for my education without a work permit, especially to pay for graduate, professional, or medical school.
- My opportunities to grow in my education and career are limited because of my undocumented status.
- I don't want to continue waiting for immigration reform.
- I cannot receive the benefits that I'm paying for in my taxes.
- I don't feel comfortable starting a family while undocumented.
- I want to travel and pursue my dreams without fear.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

I've been thinking about what I want in my life and I don't think I can find it in the U.S...

- I want to have legal status.
- I want to have a sense of security and stability in relation to my status. I want to feel like I belong.
- I want to have a sense of control over my own life and not depend on political promises.
- I want to have opportunities to grow in my career.
- I want to pursue graduate, professional, or medical school and have opportunities to receive funding or work to pay for it.
- I want to be able to make long term plans.
- I want to start a family and not be threatened by deportation.
- I want to own a house.
- I want to travel the world.
- I want to see my family outside of the U.S.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Staying in touch with you is very important to me. If I leave the U.S., here's how we can maintain our relationship...

- We can commit to talking every day or several times a week via phone calls, video chats, or messaging.
- We can share pictures and important moments with each other to stay updated about our lives.
- Once I get established abroad I can apply for a B1/B2 (Tourist/Business) visa to temporarily visit you. (This depends on each individual's situation and should be discussed with a lawyer during the process of deciding to leave).
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

*If you have family members and loved ones who are documented they can travel to visit you.

If you have loved ones in the U.S. who depend on you financially, or for other kinds of caregiving and support, it's a good idea to talk to them about how they can get their needs met if you leave the country. Try some of these questions:

- Who else can support you if I am not able to? Who can you turn to when you need help?
- What can we do to prepare so that you feel comfortable before I move?
- How can I support you from abroad?

I've been thinking about leaving the U.S. and I'm wondering how you feel about it?

Here are some of the things that reluctant loved ones might say...

- Have patience. Things will change one day and you will get papers.
- By leaving the U.S. you are throwing away everything you have achieved in this country.
- Going back to your country of birth is like going "backward" and wasting everything that you and your family have worked so hard for.
- Why don't you marry a U.S. citizen?
- You will not have the privileges that come with living in the U.S. anywhere else.
- You are going to be by yourself and if something happens to you, we will not be able to be there with you.
- It's going to be hard for you to start a life in a new country by yourself. You have not been to [country of birth] in years and you won't know what to do once you are there.

Use the space below to brainstorm how you might respond to some of these comments. (Remember, this is not about convincing anyone, but sharing how you truly feel about your situation and what you want in your life.)

These are some of the things that understanding loved ones might say...

- It makes me sad that you have to leave the U.S. to pursue your aspirations, but I understand why you are making this decision.
- I'm going to miss you.
- If you think you will have more opportunities to grow in your career than here in the U.S., go ahead.
- If you want to start a family without fear that you might someday be separated, it might be a good idea to leave.
- If you don't feel like you belong to this country and want to seek a sense of belonging, you should see what else is out there...
- You can always go back to your country of birth and you will have more opportunities now because you have a U.S. education, you speak English, and you know U.S. culture.
- I support you. If you are tired of the constant limitations you face because of your undocumented status, you should go somewhere where you can have a legal status and have peace of mind.
- I believe in you and I know you will accomplish your dreams and goals wherever you go.

*Whether people's responses are of reluctance or of support, if they love you and want to see you happy, they will support you even if they do not say it.

This resource is part of the "Life Outside the U.S." project. It was created by Alejandro Espinoza with editing support from Claire Calderón. Visit LifeOutsideTheUS.org to learn more. Find all the resources created and gathered for this project at immigrantsrising.org/LifeOutsideTheUS-resources.

Immigrants Rising helps you make decisions based on your potential, not your perceived limits. Visit our website so you can see what's possible: www.immigrantsrising.org. For inquiries regarding this resource, please contact Katharine Gin, Co-founder and Executive Director, at kathy@immigrantsrising.org.