How to Talk to Adults about Divestment
1. Explain what divestment is...

- Divestment is the opposite of investment. When a person or organization sells off stocks, bonds, and investments funds tied up in unethical businesses, they are divesting.
- With investment, a company or individual will buy stocks and bonds with the purpose of generating financial returns.
- When someone invests in the fossil fuel industry, they are quite literally profiting off of ecosystem destruction, human rights violations, pollution, and climate change.

2. Follow up questions to predict...

a. Which companies should be divesting from the fossil fuel industry?
   - Any banks or companies with investments in fossil fuels. This includes universities, teacher pension funds, banks, etc.
   - Chase Bank, Blackrock, and Liberty Mutual Insurance have the largest investments in fossil fuels.
     - Since 2016 when the Paris Climate Agreement was signed, Chase alone has invested $269 Billion in the fossil fuel industry; they are the largest funder of fossil fuels in the world.
     - Liberty Mutual is the largest insurer of fossil fuel companies.
     - Blackrock, the world’s largest asset manager, is the largest investor in both the fossil fuel industry and deforestation in the world.
   - From 2016 to 2019 35 Banks have together invested $2.7 trillion in fossil fuels, financing projects like coal mines, tar sand pipelines, deepwater drilling, and fracking wells.
   - Nation wide, public pension funds control more than $4 trillion in assets and nearly all of them have investments in fossil fuels.
   - University divestment campaigns are active across the country and have been successful in divesting trillions of dollars from fossil fuels. Among those that have divested include, University of Syracuse, Georgetown, the University of California system, and Harvard.
   - Individuals should also divest their assets. This can look like moving your money out of these banks or choosing to support local businesses instead of mainstream companies.
b. **What can be divested from?**

- Anything invested in can be divested from, however people/companies typically divest from unethical institutions such as fossil fuels, prisons, chemical companies, military operations, etc.
- The injustices in society are intersectional, which means that they are all connected, and it is important to address all of them together, rather than separately. There is no climate justice without racial justice, justice for immigrants, justice for indigenous communities, justice for women, justice for LGBTQ+ people. The list goes on. When talking about fossil fuel divestment, we can’t neglect to talk about and include social injustices in our activism. Not only does the moral high ground give us power, but we won’t be successful in our endeavors if we fail to be intersectional.

c. **Why is fossil fuel divestment so important?**

- The financial sector is funding, insuring, and investing in the climate crisis. If we are going to address climate change with the aggression and urgency it deserves, we must divest from the companies that are causing it.
- We must employ every method we have to fight climate change and divestment is a vital one. We must hit fossil fuel companies at their core, to loosen their hold on the government and financial market.
- Fossil Fuel companies and those that are invested in them, are complicit in mass deforestation, pollution and the exploitation of Indigenous communities.
- The fossil fuel industry’s business model requires that they emit six times more carbon into the atmosphere than humanity and the planet can handle.
- The wave of the future will be away from fossil fuels. In the last decade profits have been on a continuous decline. It is no longer financially lucrative to invest in the fossil fuel industry. In other words, they are not garnering economic returns, due to the growing transition towards renewables. This is referred to as a stranded asset.
- When companies see large institutions moving their money from fossil fuels, they are more likely to question the viability of the fossil fuel industries business model.
Divestment from harmful industries builds momentum for moving money into local community development, clean energy projects, and sustainable companies.

d. **Is it difficult for companies to divest?**
   - Many companies choose to passively invest, matching their investments to an index which likely contains fossil fuel companies. This is the simpler and safer method of investment, allowing companies to ignore the moral imperative of divestment.
   - If companies switch to a form of active investment they will have a direct say in where they invest their assets and it will be easier for them to divest.

e. **Does divestment really make a difference? If we divest isn’t someone else just going to buy those stocks.”**
   - Divestment is both a symbolic moral stance, and a powerful vehicle for change when done collectively.
   - We can relate it to voting, we tell people to vote because collective action is vital to influencing positive change.
     - A mass movement for divestment, where trillions of dollars are taken out of immoral industries, will impact fossil fuel companies financially, in a similar way to how voting for a candidate is important to who gets elected.
   - The more we can make climate change a moral issue, the more we can push society towards action. We must make it clear that if destroying the planet is wrong, then profiting off of that destruction is wrong.
   - The South Africa apartheid is an excellent example of a successful divestment movement where morality became a key factor.
     - Divestment from South Africa began in the 1960s to pressure their government to dismantle the apartheid system.
     - In the beginning the movement in America failed to garner support from Washington, so it responded by pressuring individual companies to end their involvement with the Apartheid state on principles of corporate social responsibility.
A set of principles were written up for companies to adopt stating that they would only do business with others that ensured integration and equal rights for all employees.

Divestment in America reached critical mass after Black political resistance to the 1983 South African Constitution.

By 1990 over 200 companies severed ties with South Africa, resulting in a $1 billion loss of investment.

26 states governments, 22 countries, and 90 cities divested from multinationals that did business in South Africa.

Additionally universities such as Harvard and the UC system divested from South Africa as well.

Students in both the United States and South Africa played a vital role in dismantling the apartheid government, demonstrating, not for the first time, that youth hold revolutionary power.

3. Talk about how someone may engage in divestment themselves...

a. Who should I move my money from?
   - Move your money from anywhere that has its money invested in the fossil fuel industry
   - This includes most big banks like Chase, Citibank and Wells Fargo
   - More information can be found at stopthemoneypipeline.com

b. Where should I move my money to?
   - Beneficial State Bank, Aspiration Bank are two that do not invest in climate destruction.
   - Local Credit Unions are also a good option. Many of them invest in local community development as opposed to the destruction of the planet.

c. What actions can I take to urge banks to divest?
   - Move your money out of banks that fund fossil fuel companies. When you leave, write a letter or email urging them to divest and explaining the reason for your departure.
   - Get involved in a campaign like Stop the Money Pipeline, which is actively working to push banks like Chase to Divest.
   - Take part in a phone banking event, to call the board of directors.
   - Take part in another form of direct action, like a march, rally, sit in, art installation, etc.
d. **What actions can I take to urge my university to divest?**
   - Over 100 universities in the United States have divestment campaigns on their campuses. If one already exists you can join one. If your school doesn’t, reach out to DivestED to find out how to start one. If you reach out to your local environmental organization you will likely find others who are interested in getting involved.
   - Universities have varying financial structures. Make sure to do your research and find the right people to talk to in the administration.

e. **How can I further support the movement?**
   - Educate your friends and family
   - Participate in social media campaigns
   - Do further research
   - Sign petitions of support and pledges of commitment
   - Reach out to an organization that is doing divestment work the resonates with you to get involved in one the ground organizing

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4. **Explain why divestment is important to you...**
   - Your family, teachers, etc. want to hear about the things you are passionate about.
   - Tell them why you care about divestment, the climate crisis, the future of the planet, the people who are most at risk for experiencing the greatest impacts of climate change etc.
   - Share your experiences, fears, and hopes. These can be more powerful than anything else.

5. **Some tips for getting your points across smoothly...**
   - Try to avoid being alarmist and remain calm while talking about these topics. They can elicit a lot of passion which is good, but it is important to be relaxed so that the other person feels comfortable.
   - Avoid being argumentative at all costs. It is ok to engage in a debate, but make sure both parties are listening to each other’s points and providing rational responses. Any yelling or accusations will shut a person down to discussion immediately.
   - Be relatable and use language that is accessible. Don’t use big words or acronyms without first explaining what they mean and don’t talk about aspects
of the movement like they are supposed to know what you are referring to. Though you are talking to an adult, they may have never been exposed to this subject before.

- Be patient with the person. You may need to explain things multiple times or in different ways to get the point across.
- Don’t talk down to the person because you know more on this topic then they do. Engage in a discussion as equals.
- Be open to hearing new ideas. The people you will talk to have valuable life experience and wisdom that may help you see things in new ways. If they offer up pieces of knowledge they have, engage, ask questions, relate to something you may have experienced.