

Keep talking to your teen! Family conversation counts!

If your kids learn that they can trust you with the “little stuff,” they are more likely to talk to you about the “big stuff.”

Start Now You do not have to wait for an “important” conversation to have a good conversation. Find times to talk with your children every day about both trivial and important issues, and when you have these conversations, really listen to what they have to say.

Create Times for Talking Expect everyone to have a family meal together. Turn off the radio while you are driving. Play a board game instead of watching television.

Be Approachable If kids think that they will get a lecture or be judged every time they bring up an idea or a personal experience, they will be hesitant to communicate. Try to listen without judging and to ask questions without accusing. Show that you understand what your children are feeling by sharing similar experiences.

Take Concerns Seriously Sometimes it is easy to dismiss children’s concerns or worries because, from an adult perspective, they are not important. However, it is important that you not take them lightly, laugh at, or tease them. If it is important to your children, empathize and listen. They will learn that they can come to you about other things—some of which you will think are *really* important.

Be Intentional

Be Patient Whether they are tired or upset, sometimes your children are not ready to talk. Give yourself and your children time and space, but do not make it an excuse to avoid conversation.

Listen for More than the Words What your children are “saying” may not come out in words. It may show through body language, tone, or other actions. Listen carefully and try to understand the feelings behind the words, not just the words themselves.

Think Through the Tough Conversations Sometimes you need to have difficult conversations. When the time comes, think it through in advance. What do you want to say? Which questions do you need to ask? What can you do to make it go as well as possible?

Be Creative

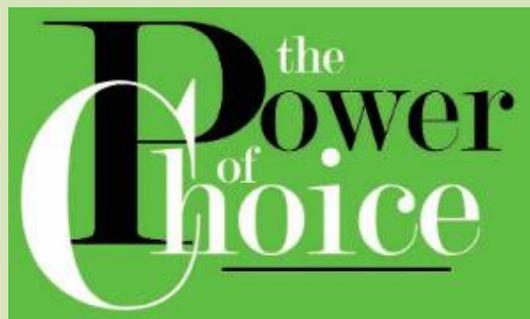
Do Something Else Many people do not like “just talking.” They have better conversations when they are shooting hoops, putting together a puzzle, hiking in the mountains, or working on a service project. Doing things together that both you and your children enjoy may be the best way to get a conversation going.

Communicate without Talking There are many ways to communicate that you care besides talking. If your children do not want to talk, leave a caring note, send a friendly e-mail, or just sit by their bed and give them a backrub. You do not have to say anything to communicate how much you care.

Maintain Perspective

Give Them Time Sometimes kids need space to work through things and figure out who they are. Give them time and space, but always let them know that you are there, you care for them, and you are ready and willing to listen.

Be Patient Sometimes you and your children will say things that you regret. Other times, you will miss opportunities for a great conversation. Relax—this is perfectly normal. Despite the fact that you may already have a hard time talking, remember that you can always start a new conversation, even a simple one, which can help get you back on track. Learn, forgive, and try again.



Sharing the good news!