

Talking With Your Child

A guide to conversations that go deeper than “Fine”

Questions · Listening · Presence · Faith

The most powerful thing you can give your child is your full attention and a safe place to be known.

1 Creating the Right Setting

Great conversations rarely happen by accident. They grow in the right conditions — when your child feels relaxed, unhurried, and safe. A little intentionality about when and where you talk makes an enormous difference.

Choose the Right Moment

Not every moment is a good moment. Children open up when they feel comfortable, not cornered. Some of the best conversations happen:

- In the car — side-by-side, no eye contact required, something to look at
- At bedtime — the day is winding down and guards come down with it
- During a shared activity — cooking, building, drawing, shooting hoops
- On a walk — movement loosens the mind and the mouth
- Over a snack or meal — food creates natural comfort and ease



What to Avoid: Right after school when they need to decompress. Right before bed when they are overtired. In front of siblings when privacy matters. When you are rushed, distracted, or emotionally depleted.

Make It a Ritual, Not an Interrogation

The families who talk the most are the ones who have made connection a regular, low-stakes habit — not a scheduled “serious conversation.” Build small daily rituals that keep the door open:

- A 10-minute check-in after school with a snack
- A question at the dinner table that everyone answers, including you
- A brief chat at bedtime before lights out
- A weekly tradition — pancakes, a walk, something that belongs to just you two

Put the Phone Away — Really

Your child is always watching. When you look at your phone mid-conversation, the message they receive is: something else is more important than you. That message lands deep, even when they do not say so.

“We teach children what they are worth by what we pay attention to. Put down the phone and pick up your child.”

— Jim Gaffigan

- Set your phone face-down across the room during conversation time
- If you cannot avoid it, name it: “I am putting this away because you matter more.”
- Model what undivided attention looks like — they will learn to give it to others
- When you catch yourself drifting, re-enter gracefully: “Sorry — I want to hear more about that.”

Create a Conversation-Friendly Environment

- Sit at their level, not above them — especially for younger children
- Turn off background noise: TV, music, notifications
- Use a warm, relaxed tone — your emotional temperature sets theirs
- Make eye contact, but do not stare — sideways conversations sometimes feel safer
- Keep your body language open: uncrossed arms, leaning in gently

2 Asking Better Questions

The questions you ask are the doors your child walks through. Closed questions get closed answers. Open questions open worlds.

Closed Question	Open Question
Did you have a good day?	What was one thing that surprised you today?
Did you like it?	What did you think about that?
Are you okay?	What's been on your mind lately?
Did you make any friends?	Who do you like being around at school? What do you like about them?
Were you kind today?	Was there a moment today you felt proud of yourself?

Everyday Questions Worth Asking

- › *What was the best part of your day? What was the hardest part?*
- › *If you could change one thing about today, what would it be?*
- › *What made you laugh today?*
- › *Was there a moment today when you felt left out, embarrassed, or uncomfortable?*
- › *Is there anything you are worried about right now?*
- › *What are you looking forward to this week?*
- › *What's something you wish grown-ups understood better about being a kid?*
- › *If you could tell me one thing you really want me to know, what would it be?*

Questions That Go Deeper

- › *When do you feel most like yourself?*
- › *What is something you are getting better at? What's something that still feels hard?*
- › *Is there something you have been wanting to talk about but did not know how to bring up?*
- › *What does a good friend do when another friend is struggling?*
- › *What's something you believe that you think most people your age don't?*
- › *If you could design your perfect day from start to finish, what would it look like?*
- › *What is one thing you hope our family never forgets?*

♥ **Remember:** The goal of a question is to open a door, not to arrive at an answer you already have in mind. Ask with genuine curiosity. Then get quiet and wait. The pause after a question is not empty — it is where the real thinking happens.