

SAFE Kids HEALTHY Kids HAPPY Kids



Small Talk—Fun Conversations With Your Teen

What do you and your teen say to each other when you are together? Do you talk or do you lecture? Do you have fun conversations, or do you have long discussions?

Experts agree that communication between parents and children is important. It is so important that some experts tell parents to schedule family time together. They encourage parents to spend weekly one-on-one time with each child. Communication with your teen is wonderful, but what do you say when you are together?

Often, parents only talk to their kids when they want to know something. Others only talk when they feel like giving a lecture. “Where are you going?” “Where have you been?” “Why is your door closed?” “Take out the garbage. This is the fourth time I told you.” “If you studied as hard as Bill, you could get straight A’s.”

Dr. Glen Latham in *The Power of Positive Parenting* tells parents to talk to their teen “...without telling, sometimes talking without saying anything.” Parents will be surprised at what kids will share in a short, pleasant

conversation. Short, frequent talks make teens feel wanted, special and important.

Parents are often tempted to lecture. Dr. Latham says, however, “Unless what you are about to say or do has a high probability of making things better, don’t say it and don’t do it.” In other words, think before you speak or act.

Teens occasionally need help solving problems. Parental advice can be helpful. When mistakes are made, parents can draw on past experiences to help teens avoid future mistakes. But, teens do not learn when parents judge, nag or argue. They tune you out.

When you see your teenager tonight, try some “small talk.” Talk to your kids like you would your friends. Keep your conversation light. Show your teen that you enjoy her company. Discuss sports or politics. Compare movies or share interesting information about books you have read. Talk about current events or something you saw on TV. Laugh. Share a joke. Your conversation may only last a few minutes, but your teen will walk away with a smile and a desire to come and talk to you again soon.



Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.
544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.