

# HOW TO START A CONVERSATION

- Ask questions that require more than a one word answer:
  - Avoid: “How did you like \_\_\_\_.” “How was school?”
  - Use: “The speaker said \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think?” “What was the best thing about today?” “What did you do in history class today?”
- Talk about some easy topics (don’t try to bench press 395 lbs. on your first try)
  - “What level are you on in \_\_\_\_\_ (video game)?” “What happened on ‘Favorite TV Show?’” “Check out that car. You like it?”
- Dark ops
  - I don’t know why, but kids are more receptive to conversation at night, especially after everyone else has gone to bed. Use that time to chat.
  - Don’t expect or force eye to eye contact. Sometimes if they are very uncomfortable they will clam up if they have to look you in the eye. Make sure they have an “out.” i.e.: I did the “Talk” with my son as he and I were on a long drive (his eyes were glued on the interstate!)
- Start with a compliment (or just give one) or a thank you
  - i.e.: “Thanks for coming to this talk tonight. I really appreciate you being open to listening.” “I really like the friends you had over.”
- Ask them what they like
  - Everybody likes talking about themselves.
  - “What’s your favorite class? Why?” “If you could have any car, what would it be?” “If you could visit any country, which one would it be?” “If you could have free clothes from any store, which would you chose?” etc.
- Don’t interrupt
  - Ask follow-up questions, but don’t be too quick to tell them what you think...they hear us all the time.
- To them, you are “mom” or “dad”
  - Do you remember the fear/reverence/respect you had for your mom and dad? That’s you now. Do you remember thinking/feeling that your mom and dad were out of touch and a little embarrassing. That’s you too.
  - Show them that you love them and that you want open communication with them.
  - Don’t be afraid to be “mom” or “dad.” You are the authority figure and they need that as they navigate their teenage years.
  - Ask them if you are being reasonable with your rules or with what you are saying. Tell them the reason for what you are saying and let them give you feedback.

