BUILD A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR TWEEN & TEEN

CONVERSATION SCRIPS



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A Powerful Formula To Use To Communicate:

Here is a formula that uses positive communication strategies that shift the conversation from negative to positive and help you to solve problems and find solutions together.

Print it out and put it somewhere for easy reference when you need it! :)

A Powerful Formula When You Need To Set A Boundary With Your Tween or Teen:

Even if you don't use this formula exactly it will help you to get clear and express what you are wanting in a more effective way (and you will be less prone to be reactive).

#1 Begin by sharing what you're noticing.

You: I'm noticing _____ (express the problem).

"I'm noticing I'm doing all the dishes.""
"I'm noticing playing hours of video games and not getting out of the house or doing your chores."
I'm noticing I'm nagging a lot and we're arguing a lot."

#2 Share what you're feeling and what you want or don't want.

Examples of this:

YOU:
I'm noticing _____.

I'm feeling _____.

What I want is_____.
What I'd like is _____.
What I don't want (or what I don't like) is _____.

"I'm feeling resentful and I don't want to feel this way."
"I don't want to be fighting and arguing with you."
"I want us to figure out a way we can work this out together."

Another example...

YOU: Share what you want.

“I want you to be responsible for your own dishes and contribute to the dishes getting done.”
“I would like to come to an agreement with you about a reasonable time to spend on the video games.”

#3 Invite them into the conversation and to share their thoughts.

"What do you think about what I just said?"
"I'd like to hear your perspective."
"What's getting in the way of you _____?"
"Is there something you'd like me to understand?"

#4 Listen to what they have to say.

Warning: This can be the hard part because we are prone to want to interrupt or get them to see things our way. They may begin to argue or push back against what you just said. Stay calm anyway and hear them out.

Withhold criticism and judgement. (This is where you have to bite your tongue!)

#5 Brainstorm Solutions and be willing to negotiate.

Ask questions such as...

"Do you have some ideas about how we can work this out?”
“What do you think we could do differently?”
“What do you think is fair?"
"Okay, I'd love to hear your thoughts on how we might find a solution together."
"Tell me what you think we should do."
"What do you think might help?"
"What can we do to get the dishes done so I am less resentful?”
"How many hours of video games do you think you should be allowed to play?" (they may say a crazy amount - stay calm and remember this is a negotiation).

#6 Decide agreed-upon consequences.

Set consequences that can be enacted quickly and provide your teenager a chance to try again. When possible and if appropriate discuss consequences ahead of time together.

For example,

"We agreed that if you “You came home very late after we agreed on a time, so tomorrow I will pick you up.”

“I’m noticing that when you’re playing video games you're yelling and swearing. You need to reset your brain. So for the rest of the day, there will be no video games and you can try again tomorrow.”

#7 Revisit how it's working after a week.

#8 Stay consistent.

Remind yourself this is a process. Follow through and allow them to have their feelings when you do (expect they won't like it and give you some push back - this may be the hardest part).

Write out how you might use this formula to talk to your tween or teen.

Consequences:

The Goal of Consequences:

Consequences help us all to learn and grow. When kids experience the results of their actions, they learn to make better choices and improve their behaviors.

Consequences = learning. When you have consequences your child learns that their behavior is their decision, choice, and responsibility. As a parent, your responsibility is to help them to learn the reality of how the world operates and to learn to face the consequences and make better decisions in the future.

Your Agreed On Consequences:

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My Action Plan:

Next Steps I Will Take...

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Other Helpful Communication Tips

Nagging and giving orders creates resentment and resistence, instead...

Describe the problem. "Jeff, it's a small pizza. There's only enough for each of us to have one slice."

Use Humor to change the mood and encourage everyone's playful spirit.

Instead of attacking, threatening or criticism... (which creates power struggles, them attacking back or them withdrawing)....

Describe what you feel. "I'm disappointed. You told me you'd unload the dishwasher before you went to Katie's house."

Offer a choice. "What would you rather do, turn the volume down or close your door?"

Give a reminder. "Time to take the trash out."

Say it in a word. "Volume." or "Dishwasher."

Do the unexpected. "With humor, put your hands over your ears and make a gesture to turn down the volume.

Taken from How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk. Faber, Adele; Mazlish, Elaine. HarperCollins.

Expressing Your Irritation

TO YOUR TEENAGER

Instead of accusing or name-calling:
“Who’s the birdbrain who left the house and forgot to lock the door?!!”

Say what you feel:

“It upsets me to think that anyone could have walked into our home while we were away.”

Say what you’d like and/or expect:

“I expect the last person who leaves the house to make sure the door is locked.”

TO YOUR PARENT

Instead of blaming or accusing:

“Why do you always yell at me in front of my friends? No one else has parents who do that!”

Say what you feel:

“I don’t like being yelled at in front of my friends. It’s embarrassing.”

Say what you’d like and/or expect:

“If I’m doing something that bothers you, just say, ‘I need to talk to you for a second,’ and tell me privately.”

Taken from pg. 163 How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk. Faber, Adele; Mazlish, Elaine. HarperCollins.

“Children learn what they live."

These are the most basic principles of caring communication. Every day, in the push and pull of family life, we want our teenagers to learn that:

Feelings matter.
Not just your own, but those of people with whom you disagree.

Civility matters.
Anger can be expressed without insult.

Words matter.
What you choose to say can cause resentment or generate goodwill.

Punishment has no place in a caring relationship.
We’re all people in the process—capable of making mistakes and capable of facing our mistakes and making amends.

Our differences needn’t defeat us.
Problems that seem insoluble can yield to respectful listening, creativity, and persistence.

We all need to feel valued.
Not only for who we are now, but for who we can become.

Each day offers new opportunities.
Each day gives us a chance to demonstrate the attitude and language that can serve our kids in the present moment and in all the years ahead.

Our children are our gift to tomorrow. What they experience in our homes today will empower them to bring to the world they inherit the ways that affirm the dignity and humanity of all people.

Faber, Adele; Mazlish, Elaine. How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk . HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

Here are 7 Powerful Ways to Listen to Your Child:

1. Practice.

If you want your child to open up and talk to you, you need to learn to listen.

Listening is an art. We're well trained in talking, but when was the last time anyone taught you to listen?

Listening isn't as natural or as easy as it seems, especially when your teen may say something that's hard to hear.

Listening to our children takes time, patience and self-control.
The more you practice the easier it becomes.

2. Slow down.

Stop what you're doing.
Take a deep breath.
And be quiet.

What often happens when our children talk to us is we offer well-meaning advice that they never asked for.

Our intentions are good; we want to help make life better for them. But it's not what they want or need in that moment. If they wanted our opinion they'd ask.

Next time this happens, just be quiet and see what happens.

3. Listen to the words that aren't being said.

When we're truly listening, we tune in not only to what they're saying but to what they're not saying.

Pay attention to their body language and facial expressions.

Do they look sad, angry, or happy?

Reflect on what you observe,

"You look sad." Or, "You look frustrated."

You don't need to say anything else. Just wait to hear what they say in response.

4. Reflect what you hear them say.

When your child comes home from school complaining about a friend or a teacher,

Try this -

Reflect back their feelings –

"I hear you're angry". "You seem hurt" (say nothing).

Repeat their words back to them as closely as you can.

"Mr. Brown gave you a 'C' on your paper that you didn't feel like you deserved."
"Sheila talked behind your back to Nancy."
(Say nothing. Wait for their response.)

5. Understand the power of listening.

Listening is powerful.

Listening to our child gives them what they are so hungry for – the validation that who they are matters.

Nothing conveys that you love your child more than listening.

Be curious to know them.

Ask questions.

If you do this more than anything else they will know they matter and have significant worth and value.

6. Understand the calming effect listening has.

Moms, we know how often we don't want anyone to say anything when we're talking; we just need to process our thoughts out loud.

Remember - this is what our kids need from us too.

Listening to them lessens their anxiety.

Allow them to express themselves when they're upset.

Don't shut them down by trying to get them to feel less upset.

We all need to get out our feelings. Getting rid of our upset feelings actually lessens their intensity and restores us to calm. This is important to remember the next time your teenager throws a fit.

7. Keep it short and simple.

When you don't know what to say, a simple,

"Tell me more," or a "Hmmm," goes a long way.

Sounds pretty remedial but it works.

Trust me and just try it.

Focus On What Really Matters

Some days it can be challenging enough to like our teenagers let alone cherish them.

Sure, we love them like crazy, but liking them all the time, well...on the days they're yelling, ignoring us, or refusing to do anything we ask, it can be tough.

But someday, they'll be gone.

Our time is now. Let's seize these moments and make wonderful memories. Let's agree to let the small stuff go and focus on what really matters – letting them know how precious they are and how grateful we are that they are our kids.

You would be surprised at how many kids don't really believe their parents love them during "the showdowns."

How about making a conscious effort to show them you love them always no matter what.

Spend time with them.

Commit to one on one time with no agenda. Sit and watch them play a video game (no matter how much it kills you). Let them pick a movie and go out for a bite. Or just sit. No judgment, no lectures, they might actually just start to talk.

Affirm they matter to you.

Our kids need to hear how much they matter to us, when you see them, stop what you're doing, let them know: "I'm happy to see you. I care about you. I was thinking about you today. I love and miss you." Catch them doing something right and tell them how much you appreciate it. Find specific ways to affirm them.

Give them your undivided attention.

Look them in the eye.
Put down the phone.
Close the computer.
Listen without interrupting.

A perfect response, believe it or not, is a grunt...

“Hmm”, “Really?” and “Tell me more.”

Allow them to give you a fresh perspective.

When we don’t judge or lecture our kid's notice, they get excited and feel the freedom to share their thoughts with us. Resist the urge to comment, or interject your own stories.

Instead, be curious to learn more about who they are.

Ask open-ended questions – “Tell me more” and “What do you think?” or even the interjected “Wow!” or “That sounds so cool!”

Let them know you notice when they do good.

When I catch myself focusing on the negative in one of my kids, I switch my focus to ALL their amazing qualities. I tell them what appreciate about them. I make sure they recognize my love and gratitude.



Believe in their infinite potential.

Our kids need us to believe in them, each of our kids is loaded with tremendous potential.

Sometimes their potential may be hiding out somewhere like a buried treasure. Sometimes it’s hiding because they are afraid we will judge them for not making the choices we expect of them. The more you let them know you believe in their capabilities, worth and value, the more they will shine.

Be their biggest fan.

Show up.
Find positive ways to connect.
Celebrate them.
Encourage and cheer them on,

“I believe in you. You can do it!”

Have fun.
Laugh and play.
Find activities that they love and join them.
Go through picture albums and watch old videos, tell stories and reflect with pride on how precious they are.
Show them random acts of kindness.
Cook their favorite meal.
Surprise them with their favorite candy bar.
Give them a hug or back rub.
Find what speaks love to them.
Send them a positive text before they have a test, performance, or game.
Text them and tell them one reason you’re grateful for them.
Post a note with a positive affirmation in their room or lunch.

In today’s culture, our teens are yearning like never before to be seen and heard. Most are trying desperately to figure out who they are in a self-consumed world that’s often filled with noise and countless conflicting messages. A world that, much of the time, isn’t listening.

The most powerful ways to improve your relationship with your teen is to show up, create a safe place for them to talk and express themselves, and to look for ways to have fun and enjoy them (even when it's not easy).

When you show up, listen, and focus on building a healthy and strong relationship you might be surprised by how much they open up and how your relationship improves. They will become less dependent on counting their “likes” to measure they matter, and instead, they will experience a greater sense of acceptance, their own significance, and self-worth.

I would love to hear how it makes a difference in your relationship when you try it!

I'm so grateful for you.
Rooting for us so hard,
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