

## How to Have Difficult Conversations – Parent to Child

Talking to your child should be easy, but discussing friends or relationship problems can sometimes make your child shut down. Use these 6 tips to start an open, honest conversation with your child—even when the topic is sensitive.

1. Take YOU out of it. This conversation is not about you; it's about them, so when thinking about what you're going to say -- focus on them. Using stories from your past and a possible shared experience are great ways to connect, but keep the stroll down memory lane brief and solution focused.
2. Plan for it, but be flexible. Think about when someone wants to talk to you about something that you might be uncomfortable talking about. Ask them when they'd like to talk and give them a general idea of what you'd be talking about. A hungry and annoyed child is far less likely to open up and share their innermost feelings. Similarly, allow enough time for the conversation so that neither of you feel rushed.
3. Use I statements to state your observations and then follow with an open ended question about what you've seen and noticed in them.

*Example: "I've noticed you seem upset when you get home from school but after some time passes, you seem to relax. Can you tell me about what's going on at school?"*

4. Watch your tone. Tone can be the difference between sarcasm and caring, frustration and concern – making all the difference in the world to how your child will respond.
5. Don't be afraid to ask for help. There will be cases when your role as a parent just is not enough and you will need to get help. Be aware of your resources and reach out and ask for help if needed.
6. Remember – kids always have something to say; it's your role as the parent to create safety so that your child feels comfortable saying it. Model positive tone and body language, nonjudgment, and listening skills—and relax. Your child will respond!

