



Talk To 10 Session #10 - Constructive Conversations with Children

WHY FOCUS ON CONVERSATIONS?

Disagreements, issues and conflict come up, that often a conversation about the issue will make it bigger and worse. Other families tell us that they aren't sure how to have the conversation, and so they just avoid it all together because it feels overwhelming and too difficult.

SAFETY & VIOLENCE:

When talking about conflict we acknowledge that all emotions are necessary, but not all behaviours are acceptable. We encourage language with your children like: "It is okay for you to feel angry that you can't go to your mates birthday party, but it's not okay for you to punch the wall". It is important for us to differentiate between feelings of anger and frustration which are valid, and behaviours of rage and aggression which are unacceptable.

Safety always comes first, and we encourage all people to contact the appropriate services to keep themselves safe if they are ever feeling threatened.

MYTHS ABOUT CONFLICT:

It is a common error to believe that if conflict feels bad, then it must be bad. It's important to remember that conflict itself isn't bad, as conflict is simply representative of needs not being met (e.g. Not being heard / valued / understood / seen).

Conflict occurs when there has been trespass and anger is the result. Parents and teachers tell us often that they want their young people to grow up being assertive, independent young adults. Assertiveness requires being able to hold strong emotions whilst having challenging conversations to communicate our needs - this is developed through constructive conflict.

STRATEGY: CONSTRUCTIVE-CONFLICT CONVERSATIONS

The first step is to set up the **PARAMETERS**, so that everyone in the conversation feels valued. We do this through the acronym of **TALK**.

Time: Set the amount of time you will need for the conversation and stick to it regardless of whether the issue is where you would hope it to be. If you all agree on 20 minutes, then set the clock with a 3 minute signal.

Agree: Before you begin, explain that a resolution may not be possible with this one conversation, but agree on a follow-up time before you begin.

Learn: Listen to Learn. Explain that you are both in this conversation to learn about this situation, and learn about how this situation impacts you both.

Keep: You will both keep the emotions of the conversation in check. This means that you will keep your own emotions:

- 👤 and don't place them onto your child
- 👤 and not take on those of your child

Your child's anger does not belong to you. It belongs to them - so do not believe you should control it or remove it. Validate the presence of all the emotions that are brought to the table.

The second step is to set up the **RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**:

👤 If I have something hard to tell you, how would you like me to do that?
So for example, I might say, I'd like for you to tell me without being "judgy" or using a harsh tone.

👤 How will I know if we need to pause? How will you know if we need to pause?
For example, "I'm starting to feel overwhelmed, can we take a 3 minute break"

👤 What would you like me to do if you are feeling overwhelmed
For example, If I'm feeling overwhelmed, I'd like for you notice and be kind to my emotion rather than be annoyed by it

👤 Debrief. Debriefing is critical, as we all have after-thoughts, processing time where we can put together all the information and emotions that have been shared. Ensure that you both get to ask questions a few hours, or perhaps a day or so later.
For example, when everyone is calm you might ask, "how did we do?"

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