
B O N U S # 1

The 25 Conversation Starters Every Parent Should Know

*Simple Questions. Deeper Conversations. Stronger
Relationships.*

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A COMPANION TO WHY MY ADULT CHILDREN STILL CALL ME FIRST



Turn Small Talk Into Big Connection

One of the questions I get asked most is how I got my children to open up to me so easily, even now that they're adults. The honest answer is that it was never one big conversation. It was hundreds of small ones — ordinary questions, asked often enough that talking to me simply became normal.

The questions on the following pages are the kind I actually used, in the car, at the dinner table, during a walk, or right before bed. None of them are complicated. What makes them work isn't the wording — it's what happens after you ask.

HOW TO USE THESE

- Ask one question at a time. This isn't an interview — give it room to breathe.
- Follow their answer with “tell me more” before you respond with your own opinion.
- Resist the urge to correct, teach, or fix anything in the first minute. Understand first.
- Some questions land better in the car or side-by-side than face-to-face — try both.
- If you get a one-word answer, that's alright. Come back to it another day. Consistency matters more than any single conversation.

Use these in whatever order fits your family. Skip the ones that don't feel like you. The goal was never a perfect script — it was a habit of asking, and a habit of listening to what came back.

EVERYDAY CONNECTION

For ordinary days, when nothing in particular is wrong

- 1 “What was the best part of your day today?”
- 2 “What was something that annoyed you today?”
- 3 “If you could redo one part of today, what would it be?”
- 4 “What made you laugh today?”
- 5 “What's something you're looking forward to this week?”

UNDERSTANDING THEIR WORLD

For learning what their day actually looks like from the inside

- 6 “Who did you spend the most time with today?”
- 7 “What's a subject or skill you wish you understood better?”
- 8 “Who's someone you admire right now, and why?”
- 9 “What's something everyone else seems to like that you don't, and that's okay?”
- 10 “If you could change one rule at school or work, what would it be?”

EMOTIONAL CHECK-INS

For finding out how they're really doing, not just how they say they're doing

- 11 “On a scale of one to ten, how are you really doing today?”
- 12 “Is there anything you've been carrying alone that you'd like to share?”
- 13 “What's something that's been on your mind lately?”
- 14 “Do you feel like people really listen when you talk?”
- 15 “Right now, do you need advice from me, or just someone to listen?”

VALUES AND CHARACTER

For the deeper conversations that shape who they're becoming

- 16 “What does a good friend look like to you?”
- 17 “Have you ever had to choose between the easy thing and the right thing?”
- 18 “What's something you're proud of that no one else noticed?”
- 19 “If you made a mistake today, would you feel safe telling me about it?”

20 “Is there a value you never want to compromise on, no matter what?”

REPAIR AND DIFFICULT MOMENTS

For after an argument, a mistake, or a moment that didn't go well

21 “Can we talk about what happened earlier, now that things are calmer?”

22 “Did I handle that in a way that felt fair to you?”

23 “Is there anything I've said or done that hurt you that we haven't talked about?”

24 “What do you wish I understood better about you right now?”

25 “What could we do differently next time something like this happens?”

One Last Thing

These questions will not fix a strained relationship overnight, and that was never the point. What they do is small and steady: they keep the door open, one ordinary conversation at a time. Years from now, your child is unlikely to remember the exact question you asked on a Tuesday evening. But they will remember that you asked. That you were curious about their world. That talking to you felt safe.

That is how a relationship that lasts into adulthood gets built — not in one conversation, but in the habit of having them.

With love,

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