

## LET'S TALK: HELPING KIDS BUILD CONVERSATIONS THAT SHOW LOVE

January 3, 2026

Families talk a lot, but sometimes even the simplest conversations can feel challenging! While we want meaningful talks with our children, we may struggle with what to say or how to keep the conversation flowing.

The good news? Great conversations aren't just about words; they're about connection, empathy, and love. When we take the time to listen and connect with our kids, we are living out God's second-greatest commandment: to love others as much as we love ourselves. Through thoughtful conversations, we teach our children to show kindness, ask good questions, and engage meaningfully with others.



In her book *Talk: The Science of Conversation and the Art of Being Ourselves*, professor and author Alison Woods Brooks reminds us that conversation is a skill we can all develop. We can help our children feel more confident in their conversations with some practice.

Let's start with four simple tools—**TALK: Topics, Asking, Levity, and Kindness.**

- **T—Choose Topics Wisely.** Helping kids navigate conversations starts with finding the right topics.
  - **Plan together.** Talk with your child about what they'd like to discuss. What interests them? What's happening in their world? A little preparation makes conversations feel natural and fun.
  - **Share about yourself too.** Don't put all the pressure on your child to carry the conversation. Share stories from your own life to invite connection.
  - **Have a few ideas ready.** If a topic fizzles out, teach them how to transition smoothly to something new.
- **A—Ask More Questions:** Great conversations aren't just about talking. They're about listening with curiosity.
  - **Be genuinely interested.** Encourage your child to ask questions to help others tell their best stories. "What was the best part of your weekend?" gets a better response than "How was your weekend?"
  - **Avoid "boomerang" questions.** Instead of just turning the conversation back to themselves, teach your child to focus first on the other person's response.
  - **Use follow-ups.** Teach your child to keep the conversation going by asking about details the other person mentions. "That sounds awesome! What happened next?"
- **L—Add Levity:** Make it fun! Laughter and warmth make conversations inviting and enjoyable.
  - **Balance serious and fun.** Not every conversation has to be deep. Encourage fun moments and playful storytelling.
  - **Create a safe space.** When kids feel safe talking with us, they learn to trust and open up in conversations with others.

- **Offer encouragement.** Teach your child to give genuine compliments and appreciate the other person's time and thoughts. "That's such a cool idea!" or "I love how you think about things!"
- **K–Practice Kindness:** Every great conversation starts with kindness. Show your child how to make others feel valued.
  - **Let them choose first.** When my wife babysits our four-year-old grandson, the first question she asks him is, "What would you like to play today?" She shows care by putting his needs and ideas first.
  - **Use names.** Using someone's name makes interactions feel more personal and respectful.
  - **Choose positive language.** Encourage words that lift others up. Saying "That's awesome!" is much more welcoming than "That's weird" or "That stinks."

When we teach our kids how to engage in meaningful conversations, we give them a lifelong gift: the ability to build relationships, show love, and truly connect with others.

Try putting these TALK tools into practice at the next meal or the next car ride. When we do, we show them that one of the greatest ways to love their neighbor is through the power of conversation.

Let's start talking!

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Printed on June 26, 2026