

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

A calm, simple way for parents and caregivers to use these conversation starters with their teens.

This guide is designed to help you open gentle, real conversations with your teen - without pressure, without forcing, and without needing the “perfect” words.

You don’t need to use every question.

You don’t need to follow it in order.

You don’t need to turn it into a big talk.

Here’s the simplest way to use it:

1. Choose one question at a time

Pick one that feels natural for the moment.

Keep it light, steady, and unhurried.

2. Start with your own regulation

Take a slow exhale.

Soften your shoulders.

Let your tone be warm and spacious.

Your steadiness helps their steadiness.

3. Offer the question gently

You’re not trying to “get information.”

You’re opening a doorway.

4. Allow any response

A shrug, a word, a nod, silence - it all counts.

Teens communicate in many and different ways.

5. Keep the moment small

Short conversations build trust better than long ones.

6. End with connection, not correction

A simple “Thanks for sharing with me” goes a long way.

Use this guide as a tool, not a test.

Your presence matters more than your words.

CONVERSATION STARTERS GUIDE

A simple, gentle way to open real conversations with your teen — without pressure, without forcing, and without walking on eggshells.

Before You Begin

A good conversation doesn't start with the right words - it starts with the right **nervous system**.

Take 5-10 seconds to settle yourself:

- Feel your feet on the floor
- Drop your shoulders
- Slow your exhale

When your body softens, your teen's body feels it too.

How to Open the Space

Use one of these simple openings. Keep your tone soft, steady, and curious.

- "Hey, I'm checking in - how's your body feeling today?"
- "Is now a good time to talk, or should we try later?"
- "I'm here if you want to unpack anything."
- "No pressure - I just want to understand you better."

These openings tell your teen:

You're safe.

You're not in trouble.

You don't have to perform.

Conversation Starters for Everyday Check-Ins

Use these when you want to connect without going deep too fast.

- "What was one moment today that felt good in your body?"
- "What was one moment that felt a bit off?"
- "What helped you settle today?"
- "What drained your energy?"

These questions help teens build body awareness without feeling interrogated.

Conversation Starters for Stress or Conflict

Use these when things feel tense, emotional, or shut down.

- “I noticed your shoulders got tight - what was happening for you?”
- “Did something feel overwhelming just then?”
- “What do you need from me right now - space, support, or just quiet company?”
- “Is your body in fight, flight, freeze or fawn? We can work with whatever shows up.”

This shifts the focus from behaviour to **nervous system**, which reduces shame and defensiveness.

Conversation Starters for Building Trust

Use these when you want to deepen connection over time.

- “What’s something you wish adults understood better?”
- “What helps you feel respected?”
- “What’s one thing I can do differently that would make things easier for you?”
- “What’s something you’re proud of this week?”

These questions open the door to honesty without pressure.

Conversation Starters for Repair After a Tough Moment

Use these when there’s been conflict, silence, or misunderstanding.

- “I want to repair that moment - can we talk about it gently?”
- “I’m sorry for my part in that. How did it land for you?”
- “What would help us move forward in a better way?”
- “I want us to feel like a team again - what’s one small step we can take?”

Repair builds safety faster than perfection ever could.

How to Close the Conversation

End with something grounding and relational:

- “Thank you for sharing with me.”
- “I’m here with you.”
- “We can pause and come back anytime.”
- “Your feelings make sense.”

This helps your teen’s nervous system settle and signals that the relationship is still intact.

A Final Note for Parents

You don't need perfect words.

You just need a **regulated presence**, a **soft tone**, and a willingness to listen without fixing.

Your steadiness is the intervention.