25 QUESTIONS
TO HELP PARENTS CONNECT WITH THEIR KIDS
When your kids get into their middle school years and beyond, sometimes it feels like they don’t want to talk to you. And honestly, sometimes you don’t feel like talking to them. But communication is at the center of every healthy relationship—and one of the most powerful ways to show kids of any age that you care about them is to give them your full attention.

Even if they don’t always admit it, your child wants that connection with you. They want to talk openly with you without fear of judgement. Sometimes they just need someone to listen to them without responding with an instant solution or lesson (even though I know you’ve got wisdom to share).

As I travel around the country talking to kids in middle schools, high schools and colleges, there are four things I consistently hear from them:

1. **I wish my parents . . . would be in the present with me.**

2. **I wish my parents . . . would see me, not my friends.**

3. **I wish my parents . . . would just respect my opinion.**

4. **I wish my parents would work with me to plan my future . . . instead of planning it for me.**
IF YOU’VE BEEN STRUGGLING TO CONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS LATELY, here are some ideas—based on the sentences on the first page—that’ll help strengthen your bond. You’ll find tips on starting a conversation that feels natural and a series of questions that will help your child open up (without making you feel like you’re grilling them).

YOU ARE WHAT YOUR KIDS NEED.

They might be on their way to becoming independent adults, but that doesn’t mean they don’t still need to connect with and learn from their parents.

NO AMOUNT OF INSTAGRAM LIKES CAN MEASURE UP to the affirmation they get from you—so don’t hold back!

LET’S DO IT!
As a parent, you know your kids better than anyone else. But trust me, a little bit of prep can go a long way! If you’re determined to have a better connection with your kids, you might decide to spend some time getting up to speed with what’s going on in their world and planning how to have a conversation with them—not just what you’re going to say.

HERE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTION STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOU SIT DOWN WITH YOUR KIDS:

■ GET ON THE SAME PAGE WITH YOUR SPOUSE.

This has to be a team effort. Even if you decide that both of you aren’t going to talk with the kids at the same time, each parent needs to know what the other is planning to say and how they’re going to approach different topics. You can help each other pick out the right questions, figure out timing, and pray for your kids and their future.

■ STUDY UP ON YOUR KIDS.

It’s not creeping—it’s research! If they have certain interests you don’t know a lot about, now’s a great time to learn more.
CHOOSE QUESTIONS BASED ON YOUR CHILD.

Not all of the questions in this list will engage your kid. Choose the ones you know they’ll connect with!

DECIDE HOW MANY QUESTIONS YOU’LL ASK.

Unless your kids really love answering questions, start with one and build from there. The conversation might flow naturally and you might cover a lot of ground, or you might need a long time just to cover one topic.

PLAN THE SETTING.

I don’t know your kids personally, but I do know that most kids won’t respond well if they think they’re sitting down to have a serious discussion. And many of them will get anxious or think they did something wrong if you say, “We need to have a talk.” Instead, think of an activity they really enjoy doing and invite them to do it with you. Maybe it’s hiking, playing a sport or video games, cooking, shopping—tailor it to your kid’s interests. Make sure it’s just you and them (no siblings)! This is your time together. Once you guys are already bonding, it’ll be easier to find a natural place to start asking deeper questions.

ANTICIPATE FAILURE.

Let’s face it. Growing up is hard, and parenting is hard too. Your kids might not respond the way you expect or hope they will, but don’t get discouraged. Keep making those connections—your kids will appreciate it one day, even if they don’t seem to right now.

THINK ABOUT YOUR RESPONSES.

If your kid says something that shocks, disappoints, or downright scares you, take a deep breath and try not to respond emotionally. That doesn’t mean they’re right. It just means you’re giving them a chance to be open with you and build trust. When they see that you’re willing to listen without immediately shutting them down, they’ll open up to you more—which gives more opportunity for guiding and speaking truth into them. Listen first. Deal with the mess later.

PRAY.

As much as I know you love your kids, God loves them even more. He knows their hearts like none other, and He will help you, guide your words, and bring you clarity. Lean on Him, and ask Him to bring you and your kids closer together!
Some of these questions sound more serious right off the bat, and that might be what your kids need right now. But some of them are more lighthearted and fun—while still saying a lot about who your kids are and what matters to them. Plus, these questions can be a jumping-off point to bigger topics like faith and relationships.

THEY’RE DIVIDED INTO THREE CATEGORIES BASED ON WHAT YOUR KIDS MAY BE WANTING YOU TO DO: RECOGNIZE THEM, RESPECT THEM, OR REAFFIRM THEM (OR ALL OF THE ABOVE!).
RECOGNIZE

I recognize my child.

These questions are all about discovering more about your child’s personality, interests and culture.

Q1. **IF YOU HAD $100 MILLION**
in your bank account right now, what would you do?

Q2. **I’M GONNA BE REAL . . .**
I don’t really understand your lingo. What does [insert hip new phrase the kids are using] mean?

Q3. **WHO’S YOUR FAVORITE MUSIC ARTIST?** What do you like about them/their music? (Or ask them a specific question about an artist you already know they like!)

Q4. **WHAT’S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE** of being the youngest/middle/oldest/only child?

Q5. **IF YOU COULD START YOUR OWN BUSINESS** and you knew it would be super successful, what would it be?

Q6. **IF YOU COULD GO ANYWHERE** in the world for a vacation, where would you go and why?

Q7. **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE** your ideal guy/girl?

Q8. **IF YOU COULD BE** another person for a day, who would you be?
I respect my child.

These questions are all about acknowledging that your child has their own distinct opinions and perspectives—even if you don’t agree with any of them! Listen to them first, and then later you can guide them if you feel like they’re going in a harmful direction.

Q9. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT [what’s going on in our family]? I give you permission to say whatever you want to say, and I won’t get mad.

Q10. WHAT’S ONE THING YOU WOULD CHANGE about me as a parent? (If you can hang in there and not react, you’ll be surprised by how much trust this builds.)

Q11. WHAT’S YOUR OPINION on [insert current event of choice]?

Q12. WHAT DO YOU THINK SETS YOU APART from your friends? Who are you in your friend group?

Q13. WHAT IS THE HARDEST PART about where you are in life right now? What’s something you think I don’t understand about your life right now?

Q14. WHAT’S SOMETHING YOU THINK ADULTS in general don’t get about your generation?

Q15. WHAT’S THE BIGGEST stressor for you right now? How can I help you feel less stressed?

Q16. WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE DREAMS/CAREER goals? What career would you choose for yourself?
I reaffirm my child.

I say reaffirm because your kids probably already know you love them and are proud of them, but they might need to hear it again! These questions are all about calling out your kids’ strengths, helping them see themselves the way you see them, and encouraging them to be the men and women God has created them to be. It doesn’t have to be all praise, either—sometimes it’s just as affirming if you help them through a challenge or weakness.

Q17. **WOULD YOU TEACH ME** how to [insert something they’re good at]? 

Q18. **CAN YOU HELP ME** figure out how to use this app? 

Q19. **HOW ARE YOU DOING SO WELL** at [school, sports, music, etc.]? What do you do in order to get there? How many hours did you have to practice? 

Q20. **WHEN DO YOU FEEL** like I do not love you? 

Q21. **WHAT DO I DO** that makes you feel most loved? 

Q22. **HOW CAN WE PARTNER** together to help you achieve [insert one of their life goals]? 

Q23. **DO YOU WANT** to spend more time together? If so, what do you think would be fun for us to do? 

Q24. **WHAT ARE YOU MOST** insecure about and why? (Here’s a great opportunity to affirm and speak truth into them!) 

Q25. **WHAT’S SOMETHING YOU WISH** you were better at? How can I help you with that?
PART THREE: CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

If none of this goes as planned right away, don’t give up! Depending on your child’s personality, this might have to be a more gradual process. And that doesn’t mean you’re failing as a parent. Keep pressing in, and I believe that over time, you will see results and form a stronger bond.

And if your kids do respond well, keep going and building that relationship! Keep learning about each other and you’ll find that you have a friendship that carries way into their adult years.

No matter how your kids respond in the moment, know that this effort will speak volumes to them about how you see them, know them, and love them. Even if they don’t really know how to receive that right now, deep down, they know you care about them more than any of their peers or followers on social media ever could.

REMEMBER—REGARDLESS OF WHERE YOUR KIDS ARE IN LIFE—YOU ARE WHAT THEY NEED!

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