

10 ways for Dads to get their Kids to Talk

“Hi buddy, how was school today?”

“Fine,” my son offered unenthusiastically.

We’d been here before, and I knew enough not to push any further. For the moment, I’d have to visualize what “fine” might look like.

There are times for all parents when getting information from your kids is challenging, but for fathers the challenge is often greater.

Many fathers don’t share emotions with their kids the way their mothers do, and many fathers struggle to support and listen to their kids, wanting to give advice instead.

For those fathers looking to connect with their kids, here are ten ways for them to get their kids to open up and talk with them:

1. Don’t try so hard to get them to talk.

The harder you try to get them to talk, the more they’ll resist you. When you relax the pressure a bit, they’ll sense it, and be more ready to talk.

2. Slow down your own life and be available.

Kids have a keen sense of how busy you are. If you’re providing enough down time for you and your kids, they’ll be more likely to feel comfortable talking to you.

3. Engage in a physical activity that they enjoy.

Some kids are more comfortable when they’re moving, especially boys. Shooting baskets, playing soccer, or a game of catch may have your child chattering away. Moving the body can serve to move the mouth as well!

4. Share your own life with them, and be as non-judgmental as possible.

Many fathers don’t share much of their lives with their kids. If you don’t share your own life, they’ll feel less safety in sharing theirs. And, if your kids feel they won’t be judged when they talk with you, they’ll have no reason to hold back.

5. Use open-ended questions.

Questions that begin with “why” tend to create defensiveness, and yes or no questions won’t get much of a response.

Learn to use questions that stimulate conversation. “What did you notice about that picture?” works better than, “Did you like that picture?”

6. Use the car as a place for conversation—don’t let them escape!

You’ve got them and they can’t get out! Don’t allow video games or music to interfere with your opportunity to talk with them. Far too many kids can “tune in” today rather than becoming more connected to their parents.

7. Reflect back what you hear from them.

It’s still the best way for your kids to feel heard, and the best way to encourage them to expand on the subject.

8. Talk to them while they’re coloring, painting, or drawing.

Using these activities to allow your kids to express themselves can help them communicate to you as well. Joining in on the activity yourself can produce an even greater sense of connection and sharing.

9. Provide opportunities for fun and excitement.

When your kids are doing something they love to do, they’ll want to share it with you. Provide these for your kids, and listen to them talk about it afterward.

10. Be a parent, but be a friend as well.

While you must be a parent first, being a friend to your kids will help them to want to share with you. Don’t overdo the strict parental stuff.

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Promoting involved, nurturing, responsible fatherhood

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