



PRESCHOOL CRISIS

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

YOUR CHILD STRUGGLES WITH THE THOUGHT OF SHARING A TOY—how will they cope with a much bigger crisis when it happens to them or around them? What do you do? What do you say? A preschooler may not use as many words, but there are ways to pay attention to your child's verbal and non-verbal cues.

No one knows your preschooler better than you. You will be able to notice a change before anyone else. Investigate it with loving conversations and provide an open, safe, and loving presence for them to heal and grow.

INSTILL A DEEP SENSE OF SECURITY.

When your preschooler is experiencing discomfort or has been through a crisis, there are some things you can say and do that will help them feel secure, and some things that could make them feel less safe. Here are a few ideas:

WHAT TO SAY

- "I'm here, you're not alone." (**Listen** to their feelings and validate them.)
- "I'll play with you [comfort you]." (**Move** to their play area or space.)
- "I see you." (**Pay attention** to what they mirror, watch how they play and notice changes or regression in their behavior.)
- "He/she died and that means . . . her body stopped working." (**Explain** the few words you use.)
- "I'm looking out for you." (**Adopt** a preventative approach.)
- God loves you.
- "I'll help you when you need it." (**Adopt** a reactive response.)
- Use a few simple words.

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "Everything is fine. Stop crying."
- "I can't handle you right now. Mommy/Daddy has enough to worry about."
- "Why are you acting like a two-year-old?"
- "We lost grandma (person who died)." (confusing metaphors)



ELEMENTARY CRISIS CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

WHEN A KID EXPERIENCES A CRISIS, they tend to have more questions than you have answers. What they're going through could seem minor to you, or be really scary for both of you. Either way, be sensitive to any changes you see in your child and careful to respond by offering grace and support along the way.

During this phase, your child is building a worldview, so when dealing with a crisis, remember to reiterate what is true. When you don't have the answers, assure them you're there and they are loved by you.

VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS BY REVISITING WHAT IS TRUE.

When you interact with your child, there are some things you should say and do to help them feel validated and secure. There are also a few things you should try to avoid saying. Here are a few:

WHAT TO SAY

- "Some things are changing, and that can be tough. But there are some things that will never change. Want me to tell you about some of those?" (For example: I love you. God loves you. We can trust God no matter what.)
- "Why do you think you (they) are acting this way?"
- "This doesn't make sense to me either. How can I help you feel better?"
- "Help me understand, give me an example . . ."
- "What are you reading or listening to? I want to get to know you."
- "You don't have to pretend with me. You can tell me how you really feel."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "I know exactly how you feel because I was your age once."
- "I know why you're acting this way."
- "You're scaring me."
- "Why can't you be more like (name)?"
- "This is a part of God's plan, so just have faith."



MIDDLE SCHOOL CRISIS

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

YOUR CHILD IS CHANGING and it's really just as much a crisis for you as it is for them. Their rapidly changing bodies and brains make everything extra interesting, and sometimes extra challenging. When you add to that a cultural or relational crisis, this time in their life can be very difficult. During this time, your goal is to consistently affirm your middle schooler.

AFFIRM THEIR ABILITY TO THRIVE.

Even though their journey through adolescence can be a crisis all by itself, it doesn't mean you can't support and affirm their ability to thrive through the difficult things they might experience. We want to help you by giving you some words to say and not to say.

WHAT TO SAY

- "I hear you. Keep talking."
 - "When you're ready to talk, I'm here."
 - "I'm trying to understand." Or, "Help me understand."
 - "What do you wish I knew about all of this?"
 - "This really sucks. It's bad. I'm sorry."
 - "I'm not trying to fix it. I just want to be here for you."
 - "This is hard for me. I imagine it must be hard for you, but in a different way. Want to tell me about it?"
 - "I don't think I have an answer, but I can sit here with you."
 - "I believe you have what it takes to get through this, and I'll help you."
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WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "Let me fix it."
 - "There's a reason for everything."
 - "Here's why this happened . . ."
 - "It's not as bad as you think it is."
 - "Let's get to the bottom of it now."
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HIGH SCHOOL CRISIS

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

WITH TEENAGERS, THE PRESSURE SEEMS TO INCREASE as their responsibility does. The potential for them to go experience a crisis—whether from bad decisions, rejection, or trauma—also increases. Sometimes, it's easy to want to jump in and fix things, but supporting their efforts to handle their crisis helps them more.

Be aware of signs that your teen is experiencing a crisis and don't take them lightly. Try to understand more than you feel like you know. See them for the adults they are soon becoming, be careful to respond, and offer more help if they need it.

SUPPORT THEIR EFFORTS BY RELIEVING PRESSURE.

Your faith in your teenager relieves some of the pressure and helps them grow, and your words are a great place to begin expressing belief in them. Here are a few ideas of what to say and what not to say.

WHAT TO SAY

- "I'm listening. Tell me more about how you feel."
- "It seems as if you're feeling _____, am I right?"
- "Want to walk with me? You don't have to talk, unless you want to."
- "This situation looks like it could have some consequences. What do you think we can do to support you or help you with the outcomes?"
- "From what you've told me, I think we may need some extra support for you. Would you be okay with talking to a counselor/pastor/coach?"
- "You may not feel like you can make it to where you need to go next, but we (me, your small group leaders, your friends) will carry you or sit with you until you can make your next step."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "It's a crisis for you, so it's a crisis for me too." (*Don't let their crisis become your crisis. They will need you to support them while they learn to navigate through things.*)
- "You caused this problem. You can find a way out of it."
- "I'll fix it so you don't have to."
- Nothing. (*Don't ignore a crisis that freaks you out. If you don't have something to say to support, find someone else who can.*)