

How to talk to your kids openly

An easy guide
for hard
conversations

NOTE: these conversations will be awkward. Especially if you're not used to having them. **Have them anyway.**

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|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Listen actively | Acknowledge their feelings | Be honest, for their age | Provide reassurance |

Questions to ask them

“What have you been up to lately?”

This is a great open-ended question to get the conversation started and to show your child that you are interested in their life.

“How are you feeling?”

Checking in on your child's emotional well-being can help them feel seen and heard.

“What are you looking forward to?”

This question can help your child focus on positive things in their life and can give you insight into their interests and priorities.

“What’s been challenging for you lately?”

By asking about your child's struggles, you can offer support and guidance, even from a distance.

“What have you learned recently?”

Encouraging your child to share their learning experiences can help them feel proud of their accomplishments and can show that you value their education.

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Questions they may ask you

“Why are you in jail?”

Depending on your child's age and level of understanding, you may need to **use simple language** and avoid providing too much detail.

Example answer: "I made some bad decisions and broke the law, and now I have to serve a sentence. I'm sorry that my choices have affected our family, but I want you to know that I love you and I'm doing everything I can to make things right."

“When are you coming home?”

Children may worry that their parent will never be able to come home, particularly if they have a long sentence. Be honest and **set realistic expectations**.

Example answer: "I'm not sure exactly when I will be able to come home, but I am working hard to complete my sentence as soon as possible. I know it's hard to be apart, but I want you to know that I am always thinking of you and can't wait to be reunited."

“Will you be able to come to my [special event]?”

Reassure your child that even though you are physically separated from them, you can still find ways to connect and engage with their special moments.

Example answer: "I wish I could be there for your birthday party/school play/sports game, but the rules of this facility may not allow me to attend. But I will be thinking of you and cheering you on from here, and I can't wait to hear all about it afterwards."